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MONTANA CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN

FOR

FFY 2006-2007

This Plan describes the CCDF program to be conducted by the State for the period 10/1/05 – 9/30/07. As provided for in the applicable statutes and regulations, the Lead Agency has the flexibility to modify this program at any time, including changing the options selected or described herein.

The official text of the applicable laws and regulations govern, and the Lead Agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to them regardless of the fact that, for purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text.

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AMENDMENTS LOG

Child Care and Development Services Plan for
For the period: 10/1/05 -- 9/30/07

SECTION AMENDED	EFFECTIVE/ PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE	DATE SUBMITTED TO ACF	DATE APPROVED BY ACF
1.1, 1.2, 1.8	March 2005	9/27/2006	
3.2			
3.3, 3.3.2,	August 1, 2006	9/27/2006	
3.5,3.5.3, 3.5.5	August 1, 2006	9/27/2006	
Attachments D,E, F, and G	August 1, 2006	9/27/2006	

Instructions:

1) Lead Agency completes the first 3 columns and sends a photocopy of this Log (showing the latest amendment sent to ACF) and the amended section(s) to the ACF Regional contact. A copy of the Log, showing the latest amendment pending in ACF, is retained in the Lead Agency's Plan.
2) ACF completes column 4 and returns a photocopy of the Log to the grantee.
3) The Lead Agency replaces this page in the Plan with the copy of the Log received from ACF showing the approval date.

Note: This process depends on repeated subsequent use of the same Log page over the life of the Plan. At any time the Log should reflect all amendments, both approved and pending in ACF. The Lead Agency is advised to retain those "old" plan pages that are superseded by amendments

in a separate appendix to its Plan.

PART I
ADMINISTRATION

The agency shown below has been designated by the Chief Executive Officer of the State (or Territory), to represent the State (or Territory) as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency agrees to administer the program in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations and the provisions of this Plan, including the assurances and certifications appended hereto. (658D, 658E)

1.1 Lead Agency Information (as designated by State chief executive officer)

Name of Lead Agency: **Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services**
Address of Lead Agency: **PO Box 4210**
Helena, MT 59604
Name and Title of the Lead Agency's Chief Executive Officer: **Joan Miles**
Phone Number: **Office: (406) 444-3487,**
Fax Number: **Fax: (406) 444-1970**
E-Mail Address: jmiles@mt.gov
Web Address for Lead Agency (if any): **www.dphhs.mt.gov**

1.2 State Child Care (CCDF) Contact Information (day-to-day contact)

Name of the State Child Care Contact (CCDF): **Jamie Palagi**
Title of State Child Care Contact: **Chief, Early Childhood Services Bureau**
Address: **PO Box 202925**
Phone Number: **(406) 444-1828**
Fax Number: **(406) 444-2547**
E-Mail Address: jpalagi@mt.gov
Phone Number for child care subsidy program information (for the public) (if any):
1-866-239-0458
Web Address for child care subsidy program information (for the public) (if any):

1.3 Estimated Funding

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amounts will be available for child care services and related activities during the 1-year period: October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006. (§98.13(a))

CCDF: $12,958,259
Federal TANF Transfer to CCDF: $7,287,356
Direct Federal TANF Spending on Child Care: $0
State CCDF Maintenance of Effort Funds: $1,313,990
State Matching Funds: $1,674,404
Total Funds Available: $23,234,009

1.4 Estimated Administration Cost

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount (and percentage) of Federal CCDF and State Matching Funds will be used to administer the program (not to exceed 5 percent): $ 1,096,001 (5 %). (658E(c)(3), §§98.13(a), 98.52)

1.5 Administration of the Program

Does the Lead Agency directly administer and implement all services, programs and activities funded under the CCDF Act, including those described in Part 5.1 – Activities & Services to Improve the Quality and Availability of Child Care, Quality Earmarks and Set-Aside?

☐ Yes. Skip questions 1.6 and 1.7. Go to Section 1.8.
☒ No, and the following describes how the Lead Agency maintains overall control when services or activities are provided through other agencies: (658D(b)(1)(A), §98.11)

The Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) of the Human and Community Services Division, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services manages the CCDF programs. The Child Care unit staff includes a supervisor, four Child Care Program Officers and one child care specialist. The child care unit is supported by the ECSB fiscal officer and a contracts specialist.

The program staff is responsible for oversight of the programs offered through Montana's Child Care & Development Fund. The state program staff develops and writes program policy and rules, provides training and technical assistance, develops and monitors the CCDF program operations and budget, prepares and submits reports to the Federal government and oversees the Montana child care system.

Contracts are awarded by the lead agency through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Contracts are awarded for a one-year period. Some of these contracts are renewable through an annual non-competitive application process for up to five years. The renewal process requires that the contractor submit a new work plan, budget, updated assurances, and documents of compliance:

Contract	Contractor
CCR&R Eligibility Determination, Provider Services and Community Services	Child Care Resource and Referral Service
CCR&R Network	Child Care Resource and Referral Service
Child Care Provider Grants	Child Care Provider
Early Childhood Education, CDA, AA and BA Coursework	Other – University System/Higher Education

Contract	Contractor
Early Care and Education Professional Development	Other – University System/Higher Education
Inclusion Coordination	Other – University System/Higher Education
Infant Toddler Services	Child Care Provider Other – University System/Higher Education
Mentoring	Other - Higher Education Child Care Resource and Referral Service Non-governmental community organization
Specialized Training	Other -Higher Education/Early HS Child Care Resource and Referral Non-governmental community organization

The lead agency is responsible for executing and monitoring all contracts for compliance. Monitoring is conducted through a process of on-sight visits that include review of computerized data files, agency files, and staff, parent and coordinating agency interviews. CCR&R contracts are reviewed twice annually. All other contracts are reviewed at least once a year. All contractors certify that they will comply with the state and federal requirements of the CCDF. This certification is attached to the contract document.

The lead agency in consultation with the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council is responsible for planning and making recommendations regarding the policy and rules, system, quality, and training initiatives outlined in this plan. Together the lead agency and the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council develop, implement, maintain, and evaluate the effectiveness of the state's child care programs.

1.6 Determining Eligibility

For child care services funded under §98.50 (e.g., certificates, vouchers, grants/contracts for slots based on individual eligibility), does the Lead Agency itself: (§98.11)

- Determine individual eligibility of non-TANF families?
  - ☐ Yes.
  - ☒ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that determines eligibility of non-TANF families for child care:

    The lead agency contracts with private non-profit agencies for child care resources and referral services in twelve districts. Families apply for child care services at the child care resource and referral agency, where an eligibility specialist processes the family's application and determines eligibility for child

care services. Refer to Attachment 'A', for a listing of private non-profit agencies currently serving Montana's twelve child care resource and referral districts.

- Determine individual eligibility of TANF families?
  - ☒ Yes.
  - ☐ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that determines eligibility of TANF families for child care:

- Assist parents in locating child care?
  - ☐ Yes.
  - ☒ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that assists parents:

  The lead agency contracts with non-profit agencies for child care resource and referral services in twelve districts. Referral specialists maintain up-to-date listings of licensed and registered child care programs in their district. Families learn about facility type, location, vacancies, hours of operation and cost of care. Referral specialists also counsel families on selecting quality child care programs. Refer to Attachment 'A', for a listing of private non-profit agencies currently serving Montana's twelve child care resource and referral districts.

- Make payments to providers and/or parents?
  - ☒ Yes.
  - ☐ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that makes payments:

  Child care providers submit invoices to their district child care resource and referral agency. Staff verifies and authorizes the claim using the Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) automated data system, a subsystem of the Agency Wide Accounting & Clients System (AWACS), which then process to the State Accounting Budgeting and Human Resources System (SABHRS). CCUBS payments are batched on the fifth business day of each month and every Tuesday thereafter. Payments reach the providers 2-3 days following each batch run.

1.7 Non-Governmental Entities

Is any entity named in response to section 1.6 a non-governmental entity? (658D(b), §§98.10(a), 98.11(a))

☒ Yes, and the following entities named in 1.6 are non-governmental:

Refer to Attachment 'A', for a listing of twelve private non-profit Child Care Resource and Referral agencies currently serving Montana Districts.

☐ No.

1.8 Use of Private Donated Funds

Will the Lead Agency use private donated funds to meet a part of the matching requirement of the CCDF pursuant to §98.53(e)(2) and (f)?

☒ Yes, The name and type of entity designated to receive private donated funds is:
Name: Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services
Address: c/o Early Childhood Services Bureau,
PO Box 202925, Helena MT 59620
Contact: Jamie Palagi, Bureau Chief
Type: State Agency

Since implementation Montana has been able to access $ 39,643 in additional funds. These dollars have enabled the state to maximize the impact of specialized training in early childhood. Dollars brought in through donation are over and above the CCDF matching fund. That funding stream is fully matched through the state general fund.

☐ No.

1.9 Use of State Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Expenditures for CCDF-Eligible Children

1.9.1 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement?

☐ Yes, and:

( ) The State assures that its level of effort in full day/full year child care services has not been reduced, pursuant to §98.53(h)(1).

(%) Estimated % of the MOE requirement that will be met with pre-K expenditures.

If the State uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the MOE requirement, the following describes how the State will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

☒ No.

1.9.2 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF Matching Fund requirement? (§98.53(h))

☐ Yes, and

(%) Estimated % of the Matching Fund requirement that will be met with pre-K expenditures.

If the State uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the Matching Fund requirement, the following describes how the State will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

☒ No.

1.9.3 If the State answered yes to 1.9.1 or 1.9.2, the following describes State efforts to ensure that pre-K programs meet the needs of working parents: (§98.53(h)(2))

1.10 Improper Payments

1.10.1 How does the Lead Agency define improper payments?

An improper payment is a payment requested or made to a parent or provider in error.

1.10.2 Has your State developed strategies to prevent, measure, identify, reduce and/or collect improper payments? (§98.60(i), §98.65, §98.67)

☒ Yes, and these strategies are:
The Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) contracts with 12 Child Care Resource & Referral agencies to administer the CCDF subsidy program to families who meet program qualifications. Families participate in regulated facilities, which are licensed or registered for public safety, and unregulated facilities with friend, neighbor or family care. The later group provides a minimum of self attested safety requirements as well as passes a background check. Invoices for child care benefits are only issued for qualified families who document their status of need for services provided in approved facilities from the Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) payment and licensing processing system.

The ECSB reviews a minimum of 10% of the CCR&Rs cases per year, and in addition, requires each CCR&R agency to review a minimum of 10% of the cases and share these results with the ECSB. The review

process includes checking that the income for the family was determined correctly, child support is followed through, and the family has established a need for child care assistance by participating in activities, which require child care such as working and attending school. These reviews ensure that a minimum of 20% of the subsidy caseload is reviewed each year. During the review process, if an error has been identified, the CCR&R agency would complete the process to collect any payment made in excess of what was due to the parent or provider or would adjust the next invoice to add the additional amount due to the parent or provider. Any parent or provider that makes an over claim or has an identified overpayment, which was a result of an intentional program violation (IPV) would be assessed with an additional payment penalty amount. For the first IPV, an additional 10% penalty is added to the overpayment or taken away from the over claim. For the 2nd IPV, an additional 25% penalty is added to the overpayment or taken away from the over claim. For the 3rd IPV, the parent or provider would loose their ability to participate in the program for a period of seven years.

IPV tracking is performed outside of the CCUBS system on a manual spreadsheet tracking, provider/parent data, R&R contact information, instance of violation, amount and penalty, and collection completion,

If a child care subsidy overpayment occurs because of a family, a provider or administrative error, the CCR&R eligibility specialist will contact the parent, or provider, to verify the error. The eligibility specialist will:

1. Adjust the invoice in CCUBS;
2. Notify the parent, or provider, that s/he must repay the amount of the overpayment; and
3. Attempt to have the parent, or provider, sign a repayment agreement; and finally
4. The CCR&R eligibility specialist then adjusts the appropriate invoice in CCUBS.

Repayment may be accomplished in any of the following ways:

1. The parent must make a monthly payment. (A parent who is not making monthly payments on a child care overpayment is not eligible for further child care assistance);
2. An active provider's payment may be reduced on CCUBS;
3. A parent or provider may pay the total amount of the overpayment by check or money order.

Payments must be made out to DPHHS Fiscal and delivered to the CCR&R. The CCR&R eligibility specialist then:

1. Credits the account on CCUBS;
2. Identifies the payment as 'child care' and adds a SSN so DPHHS accounts receivable can apply the payment correctly;

Fair Hearing Rights: Child Care Providers or parents, who have been notified that an overpayment has been discovered and that they are now responsible for the repayment of benefits issued improperly, have the right to due process including an Administrative Review and Fair Hearing.

☐ No. If no, are there plans underway to determine and implement such strategies?
- ☐ Yes.
- ☐ No.

1.10.3 Has your State developed strategies to identify errors in the determination of client eligibility?

☒ Yes, and these strategies are:
Montana reviews a minimum of 20% of the actual subsidy caseload each year to determine that families were indeed eligible for child care assistance. In addition, Montana provides training to the Child Care Resource & Referral agency subsidy workers twice a year to instruct on processes, which involve determination of family eligibility.

☐ No. If no, are there plans underway to determine and implement such strategies?
- ☐ Yes.
- ☐ No.

PART 2
DEVELOPING THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

2.1 Consultation and Coordination

2.1.1 Lead Agencies are required to *consult* with appropriate agencies and *coordinate* with other Federal, State, local, tribal (if applicable) and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services (§98.12, §98.14(a),(b), §98.16(d)). Indicate the entities with which the Lead Agency has consulted or coordinated (as defined below), by checking the appropriate box(es) in the following table.

Consultation involves the participation of an appropriate agency in the development of the State Plan. At a minimum, Lead Agencies must consult with representatives of general purpose local governments (noted by the asterisk in the chart below).

Coordination involves the coordination of child care and early childhood development services, including efforts to coordinate across multiple entities, both public and private (for instance, in connection with a State Early Childhood Comprehensive System (SECCS) grant or infant-toddler initiative). At a minimum, Lead Agencies must coordinate with (1) other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and/or private agencies responsible for providing child care and early childhood development services, (2) public health (including the agency responsible for immunizations and programs that promote children's emotional and mental health), (3) employment services / workforce development, (4) public education, and (5) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and (5) any Indian Tribes in the State receiving CCDF funds (noted by the asterisks in the chart below).

	Consultation	Coordination
• Representatives of local government	☒ *	☐
• Indian Tribes/Tribal Organizations, when such entities exist within the boundaries of the State	☐	☒
• Other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services.	☐	☒ *
• State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for		
○ Public health	☐	☒ *
○ Employment services / workforce development	☐	☒ *
○ Public education	☐	☒ *
○ TANF	☐	☒ *
○ State pre-kindergarten programs	☒	☐
○ Head Start programs	☐	☒
○ Programs that promote inclusion for children with special needs	☐	☒

	Consultation	Coordination
• Other (See guidance):	☐	☒

** Required*

For each box checked above, (a) identify the agency providing the service and (b) describe the consultation and coordination efforts, if any. Descriptions must be provided for any consultation or coordination required by statute or regulation.

(a) The Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council (MECAC) guides the majority of consultation and coordination activities in Montana. All of the groups listed above provide representation on the MECAC. The council is comprised of members representing the following groups:

- Parents (2)
- Child Protective Services (1)
- Child Care Providers (3)
- Services for the Disabled (1)
- Child Care Resource and Referral Network (2)
- Business (1)
- Child Care Licensing and Registration (2)
- Early Childhood Career Development (1)
- Early Childhood Higher Ed. (1)
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Services Coordinator (1)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (2)
- Montana Child Care Association (1)
- Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (1)
- Head Start (2)
- County Commission (1)
- TANF/WoRC Employment and Training (3)
- Each of Montana's Tribal CCDF (7)
- State Legislator (1)
- Public Health (1)

- Office of Public Instruction (1)
- Low Income Constituency Group (1)
- Organized Labor (1)
- Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (1)

(b) The mission of the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council is:

- The Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council provides leadership and advocacy assuring access to quality early childhood and school-age care and education for all children, their families, and their communities.

The MECAC meets three times per year and is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing the programs funded through the CCDF. The MECAC is comprised of three committees that are responsible for advising the lead agency in the areas of (1) Program Policy, (2) Quality, and (3) Public Policy.

- The Program Policy Committee (Child Care Centers, TANF/Employment and Training (WoRC), Child Care Resource and Referral, TANF/Office of Public Assistance, TANF Program Administration) is responsible for the development and oversight of policy surrounding the child care subsidy program.
- The Quality Committee (CACFP, MCCA, Child Care Plus+, Career Development, Child Care Licensing, Higher Ed., Healthy Child Care Montana,) provides oversight to the lead agency regarding all Best Beginning programs.
- The Public Policy Committee (CCR&R, Head Start/State Collaboration, Child Care Licensing, County Commission, Head Start, Business, AFL-CIO, Tribal CCDF, state legislator) is responsible for public information gathering and dissemination regarding the state plan and any legislative agenda items.

Representatives of local government - (a) The Montana Association of County Commissioners (MaCO).

(b) MaCO selects a representative to serve on the MECAC. This person is a member of the Public Policy committee and is responsible for bringing local concerns to the council. This input in turn helps to shape the public agenda for early childhood at both the state and county levels.

Indian Tribes/Tribal Organizations - (a) The Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, the Blackfeet Nation, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, the Crow Tribe, the Northern Cheyenne Nation, the Fort Peck Tribes, and the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boys Reservation.

(b) A Tribal Child Care Administrator has traditionally filled the Tribal representation seat on the MECAC. Currently a representative from a Tribal College fills that seat. The MECAC hosts an annual meeting that brings all Tribal CCDF administrators and other Tribal representatives together to discuss early childhood coordination between tribes and the state. This forum allows all parties to discuss state/tribal coordination issues such as:

- Child care licensing/registration agreements;
- Tribal Child Care service areas;
- The implications of Tribally administered TANF programs on child care programs;
- Utilization of Early Learning Guidelines in tribal early childhood programs;
- Training integration and articulation agreements between Tribal colleges and the state university system;
- Background check processes;
- Complimentary subsidy programs and rate setting; and
- Other issues as deemed necessary for discussion.

Other Federal, State, local, Tribal and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services

Public Health - (a) The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Family and Community Health Bureau.

(b) The Montana Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant is administered under a partnership between the Family and Community Health Bureau and the Early Childhood Services Bureau. The MECAC serves in an advisory capacity to that effort. The ECCS grant is an outgrowth of the Healthy Child Care Montana project. Both the ECCS grant coordinator and the former HCCM coordinator are members of the MECAC representing early childhood public health.

The Montana Early Childhood Comprehensive System's goal is the synchronization and improved collaboration of all existing pertinent services at the state and local level for children aged 0-5 and their families, so that whatever service provider a child accesses, all other needed services are identified and the child and their family are guided to that service.

The ECCS Grant involves a planning process that will build on existing information and infrastructure in Montana and a strategic plan to support a coordinated system of services for young children and their families in these areas:

- Medical Homes
- Mental Health and Social Emotional Development
- Early Care and Education
- Parent Education
- Family Support

Employment services/ workforce development - (a) the Montana Department of Labor and Industry

(b) Collaboration between DPHHS, Early Childhood Services Bureau, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI), the Early Childhood Career Development office at MSU-Bozeman and Western Montana College of the University of Montana resulted in the creation of a Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship. This effort was initially funded through a grant with USDOL. The initial effort resulted in the enrollment and training of over 100 Child Care Development Specialist Apprentices. The Child Care Development Specialist certificate is recognized as Level 4 on the Montana Early Care and Edueation Career Lattice. It is also recognized as a level of training that is higher than a CDA by Head Start.

The CCDS program was able to continue after the grant ended through the continuation of a formal partnership with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry and the DPHHS, Early Childhood Services Bureau. The lead agency uses quality dollars to support training and professional development for individuals enrolled in the apprenticeship program. The DOLI supplies program oversight and expertise in the area of registered apprenticeship, the ECSB program specialist who is responsible for statewide early childhood training coordination efforts is also responsible for administering the CCDS program.

Public Education - (a) the Montana Office of Public Instruction

(b) The lead agency under the guidance of the MECAC, works with the Montana Office of Public Instruction in several areas:

- Out-of-School-Time care - OPI is responsible for Montana's 21st Century Learning Center grants. Both the lead agency and OPI contract with the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network to establish and support a network of Out-of-School-Time service providers. The

MTCCR&R Network recently received a Mott Foundation grant to assist with this effort. This grant funds a position that is housed within the Early Childhood Services Bureau. This situation allows for ease in communication between the primary players in school age care.

- Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development - the Office of Public Instruction administers special education services offered through Part B of IDEA. The Comprehensive System of Professional Development (CSPD) advisory group became interested in early childhood professional preparation. An invitation to the early childhood specialists in Montana resulted in a multi-agency collaboration focusing on early childhood career preparation.

- Early Learning Guidelines are scheduled to be introduced to public school principals and administrator's in the Spring of 2005 and distributed for use by Kindergarten teachers in the Fall of 2005.

TANF -(a) Department of Public Health and Human Services, Human and Community Services Division, Public Assistance Bureau.

(b) The lead agency for TANF and the lead agency for the CCDF are both located in the Human and Community Services Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services. Communication happens on a regular basis regarding policy for TANF child care. The State transfers a significant portion of the TANF Block grant to the CCDF to ensure child care is available for low-income working families. This strategy serves as a diversion for people contemplating applying for TANF benefits. If child care assistance is available, it is more likely that parents will seek employment rather than TANF.

State pre-kindergarten programs - (a) Montana does not fund state pre-kindergarten programs. Pre-kindergarten services are provided through a network of private licensed and registered child care facilities; unlicensed private preschools, Head Start and special ed preschools funded through IDEA.

(b) The Montana Child Care Association and the Montana Association for the Education of Young children represent the interests of the "preschool community" on the MECAC. These collaborations strive to improve the overall quality of child care services offered in Montana. As a result many programs offer preschool curriculum using developmentally appropriate practice. Private child care businesses have been able to establish partnerships with Head Start and are looking for opportunities to partner with local school districts.

The MECAC provides a forum to discuss issues such as:

- The impact of No Child Left Behind and full day Kindergarten on private businesses.

- Professional preparation; and

- Business positioning to enable participation in potential Pre-K pilots.

Head Start Programs – (a) The Head Start Association and the Head Start/State Collaboration project.

(b) The Head Start /State Collaboration office is administered through a contract with Child Care Partnerships. The Head Start Collaboration Project Director is housed in the Early Childhood Services Bureau office. This arrangement allows for maximum communication between the State CCDF efforts and Head Start. A joint project that is currently underway involves the development of a "crosswalk" document between the Montana Early Learning Guidelines and the Head Start performance standards. This effort involves collaboration between the Head Start collaboration office, the Early Childhood Services Bureau and the ECCS grant effort.

Programs that promote inclusion for children with Special Needs – (a) Child Care Plus+, the Center on Inclusion in Early Childhood, of the University of Montana

(b) Several years ago, Montana participated in the Map to Inclusion Project. This project resulted in the development of a contract to hire a state "Inclusion Coordinator," and revisions to the state "Special Needs Rate." The special needs rate is now based on costs related to care requirements. The Map to Inclusion project resulted a stronger link between Part C agencies and CCDF funded programs. The state Child Care Program Supervisor sits on the Family Support Services Council for Part C, as does Head Start.

2.1.2 State Plan for Early Childhood Program Coordination. *Good Start, Grow Smart* encourages States to develop a plan for coordination across early childhood programs. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts in this area.

☐ **Planning**. Indicate whether steps are under way to develop a plan. If so, describe the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

☐ **Developing**. A plan is being drafted. The draft is included as Attachment ___

☐ **Developed**. A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ___

☐ **Implementing**. A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ___

☒ **Other (describe)**:

This CCDF state plan serves as the foundation for coordination and collaboration across and between the state's early childhood programs. The Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council is responsible for assuring that Montana's Early Childhood programs work together. They advise on all aspects of the CCDF (subsidy, quality and licensing), the Head Start State Collaboration Project, and the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Services grant. In addition to these projects, members represent the majority of the major early childhood service providers and programs that operate in the state.

The MECAC serves in an advisory capacity to the ECCS effort. This assures that the plan for coordinating early childhood programs actually results in a comprehensive system of service delivery in five areas: medical homes, mental health and social emotional development, early care and education, parent education, and family support.

Writing a separate state plan for early childhood coordination under *Good Start Grow Smart* would be duplicative in light of this effort.

Describe the progress made by the State planning for coordination across early childhood programs since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

Indicate whether there is an entity that is responsible for ensuring that such coordination occurs. Indicate the four or more early childhood programs and/or funding streams that are coordinated and describe the nature of the coordination.

The Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council is responsible for ensuring coordination exists. The following partnerships are in place so that the system of early childhood services that is evolving in Montana can continue to improve

1. CCDF – The CCDF serves as a foundation for the early childhood system in the state. The mission of the ECSB's Child Care Unit is to improve the affordability, accessibility and quality of child care by improving access to quality child care by offering incentives that will increase the number of providers, who are engaged in early childhood training and improving the affordability of child care for working low-income families. Partnerships are necessary to achieve this mission because of the limited nature of funding available.

2. TANF – The Department transfers funds from the TANF Block Grant to the CCDF.

3. CACFP – The Early Childhood Services Bureau is home to the State's Child and Adult Care Food Program.

4. Head Start State Collaboration project – The Early Childhood Services Bureau houses the Head Start State collaboration project.

5. 21st Century Learning and other programs for school age children– The CCDF funds the Child Care Resource and Referral Network to provide collaboration services in the area of school-age care. The CCR&R network employs a school-age program coordinator that is funded by a Mott Foundation grant. That individual is housed in the Early Childhood Services Bureau office.

6. Maternal and Child Health – The state ECCS grant is a joint effort between the DPHHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Early Childhood Services Bureau.

7. Higher Education – *Western Montana College of the University of Montana* offers college level early childhood education. The 24-credit early childhood curriculum is the foundation for the CDA or CCDS certificate programs, and Associate's Degree in Early Childhood or a Bachelor's degree in early childhood. These efforts are supported by CCDF program and scholarship dollars. Students are able to participate statewide through distance learning opportunities and articulation agreements within the University and Tribal college systems. Students are supported in their education efforts through CCDF Merit Pay, Pell Grants and other financial aide.

   Dawson Community College in Glendive provides higher education coursework in the area of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in regions where this type of training is currently unavailable or in communities that are underserved. These areas include the unserved communities of Glasgow, Malta, and Lewistown. Dawson CC continues their ECE services to the underserved areas, which include Miles City, Roundup, Baker, and Sidney, and any accessible ITV site in eastern Montana communities. DCC's Early Childhood Education coursework can lead to an; Associate of Applied Science Degree A.A.S. (60 credits) Certification (32 credits) or access to CDA credential coursework

   Flathead Valley Community College continues to be highly invested in the success of the Early childhood Education Program on both the Kalispell and the Libby campuses. Coursework has been designed to meet the Guidelines for Professional Development as set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In addition, the early childhood courses are introducing students to the Montana Early Learning Guidelines, emphasizing the practical implementation of learning standards in all content areas for young children (birth through eight). The program content continues to utilize the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base in course planning and evaluation.

8. Child Protective Services – children in need of child care because they are in danger of abuse or neglect receive funding through the CCDF and through state CPS dollars. A hierarchy of funding exists in order to maximize the dollars available to support children in need.

Describe the **results** or expected results of this coordination. Discuss how these results relate to the development and implementation of the State's early learning guidelines, plans for professional development, and outcomes for children.

Montana sets **benchmarks and expected outcomes for the CCDF** that are updated annually. These are the most recent benchmarks and results:

A. Improve access to quality child care by offering incentives that will increase the number of providers, who are engaged in early childhood training.

1. By the end of SFY 2004, increase by 10%, the number of providers accredited by nationally recognized early childhood organizations. (There were 50 nationally accredited providers at the end of SFY 2003.)
   - Update: There were 50 nationally accredited providers at the end of SFY 2003 and 60 as of SFY 2004, a 20% increase.
2. Increase by 10% the number of providers at a level 3 or higher participating on the Career Development System Practitioner Registry. (There were 345 providers at level 3 or higher at the end of SFY 03.)
   - Update: There were 345 providers at level 3 or higher at the end of SFY 2003 and 369 at the end of SFY 2004, a 7% increase.

3. By the end of SFY 2004 increase by 10% the number of caregivers completing the Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship program annually. (In SFY 2003 - 63 caregivers completed.)
   - Update: In SFY 2003, 63 caregivers had completed the program and 101 Providers had completed the program at the end of SFY 2004, a 60% increase.

4. By SFY 2004, increase the number of Star providers by 10%. (There were 23 one star providers; and 27- two star providers at the end of state fiscal year 2003).
   - Update: There were 50 star-rated providers at the end of SFY 2003 and there were 60 at the end of SFY 2004, a 20% increase.

B. Improve the affordability of child care for working low-income families:

1. By the end of SFY 2004 increase the number of working families receiving sliding fee child care services support by 7%. (5682 families were served in SFY 2001; 7603 in SFY 02; 6169 in SFY 03.)
    - Update: At the end of 2003, 6169 families were served in the child care sliding fee program and by the end of SFY 2004, 5689 families were served, close to an 8% decrease. The decrease was a result of the waiting list, implemented in September 2002 and finally rescinded in December 2003.

The TANF transfer enables the state to continue to meet and exceed the benchmarks set for the CCDF.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program's benchmarks and outcomes: Achieve the mission of the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which is 'to influence healthy lifestyle choices by facilitating program participation and compliance, funding nutritious meals and providing effective training' by the following:

A. By the end of FFY 2004, we will determine the number of centers who meet the CACFP's recommended dietary guidelines. This will be accomplished by:
    1. Completing a dietary analysis based on submitted center menus,
    2. Conducting a nutrient analysis of meals served to a sample of childcare centers. Training will be adjusted according to needs indicated by the nutrient analysis.
        - Update: 90% of participating centers met the CACFP recommended dietary guidelines after training and technical assistance by the nutrition specialist.

B. By the end of FFY 2004, improve the nutrition information available to and program integrity of 13 sponsoring organizations by:
    1. Presenting one nutrition-based training,
        - Update: One nutrition based training was held for Day Care Home Sponsors held May 11 – 14, 2004.

    2. Monitoring ½ of the 13 DCH Sponsor trainings of Providers,
        - Update: This benchmark was reduced in February 2004 from monitoring all trainings offered to monitoring ½ of all DCH Sponsors. Five of the 13 sponsor trainings were monitored.

    3. Providing technical assistance on an as-needed basis.
        - Update: Two technical assistance visits to Sponsors of Day Care Homes were held.

4. Presenting training on the topic of program integrity once for 13 sponsoring organizations with 25-30 participants.
    - Update: One program integrity training was performed during the Day Care Home Sponsor Training held May 11 – 14, 2004 with 27 attendees.

Additional results include:

1. The coordination of program policy – example programs who have been disqualified for cause from the CACFP are not eligible for Best Beginnings Quality programs.
2. The integration of CACFP nutrition training into the Knowledge Base and Early Learning Guidelines.
3. The integration of CACFP training into the State's training approval system for licensing and participation in the practitioner registry.

The mission of the **Montana Head Start State Collaboration project** is to impact the lives of low-income children and families by influencing state and local policy and the effective delivery of services, while linking Head Start Programs and communities through collaborative relationships.

1. Increase the number of Head Start and Early Head Start teachers who complete the early childhood apprenticeship program. At the end of FFY 2003, 53 Head Start and Early Head Start teachers completed the early childhood apprenticeship program.
    - Update: At the end of FFY 2004, 65 Head Start and Early Head Start teachers completed the early childhood apprenticeship program, a more than 22% increase.

Additional results include:

1. The creation of a "crosswalk" document that links the Montana Early Learning Guidelines to the Head Start Performance Standards.
2. Standardization of subsidy program policy for Head Start facilities and private child care facilities.
3. Head Start trainings approved through the training approval system and made available to child care providers.

Collaborations directed by the MECAC with regard to **programs for school age children** have resulted in:

1. TANF direct funding for the Montana Out of School Time grants that are administered by the Early Childhood Services Bureau. (SFY 2005 only)
2. The creation of administrative rules for school age programs. These rules are anticipated to be formally proposed and available for public comment in the summer of 2005.
3. A successful Mott Foundation Grant that funds a position housed in the ECSB specifically for the purpose of coordinating school age programs.

The plan for **Montana's Early Childhood Comprehensive System** is in the development phase. The vision, mission and guiding principles are:

Vision - Montana's future relies upon healthy children, families and communities.

Mission - The mission of Montana's Early Childhood Comprehensive System Initiative is to develop a system that includes an array of quality services creating opportunities for young children to achieve full potential within their families and communities.

Guiding Principles -

1. All families can benefit from education and support
2. All parents are in the process of developing their skills and abilities as parents.
3. A diverse approach to service delivery must be innovative, empowering and inclusive.
4. Every child deserves to have quality early childhood experiences.
5. Accessible and appropriate health care is a crucial component of an ECC System.
6. An ECCS must have poverty reduction, economic development and job skills training as core components.
7. The private sector must be included as and encouraged to become a key partner in ECCS development.

The draft expected results of the ECCS grant are:

Result 1. All children in Montana have a primary health care provider (medical home)

Result 2. All children are enrolled in public or private health insurance programs.

Result 3. Other community services and resources are linked to the primary care providers (medical homes)

Result 4. A continuum of services that supports positive mental health and social emotional development is available to all children.

Result 5. All early childhood caregivers and teachers receive education and information on mental health and social emotional development issues and services for young children

Result 6. All children receive services in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Result 7. Families receive appropriate mental health services when they need them.

Result 8. All young children have access to high quality early care and education to support early learning.

Result 9. All early child care and education programs and settings are linked to the overall system and community resources.

Result 10. Parents and families understand the importance of providing a nurturing environment for the development of a healthy child.

Result 11. Families will be supported in raising their children.

Result 12. All families receive education and information on all issues and services for young children in a culturally appropriate manner.

Collaborations with **Higher Ed.** result in:
1. The availability of college level training for early childhood practitioners working in a wide variety of settings.
2. The ability to embed the Knowledge Base and Early Learning Guidelines in college level coursework. Both of these documents are used as textbooks.
3. The availability of college level early childhood training in virtually any location in the state.

Collaboration with **Child Protective Services** results in:
1. The ability to maximize limited fiscal resources to support children who are in danger of abuse or neglect and in need of child care.
2. The ability to efficiently manage child care dollars through the CCUBS computer system

Describe how the State's plan supports or will support continued coordination among the programs. Are changes anticipated in the plan?

Montana's early childhood system is built on a philosophy of coordination and partnership. Because of the rural nature of this state and the limited amount of funding available for early childhood purposes, partnerships are crucial to attaining the results listed above. Areas targeted for improvement over the next two-year plan cycle include the evaluation of programs and partnership efforts and the creation of stronger partnerships in the area of the public school system.

2.2 Public Hearing Process

Describe the Statewide public hearing process held to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under this Plan. (658D(b)(1)(C), §98.14(c)) At a minimum, the description must provide:

Date(s) of statewide notice of public hearing:

On May 1, 2005, the notice of a child care state plan public hearing was printed in 12 major newspapers in the state. Additionally, all child care providers and parents receiving child care subsidies were directly mailed an announcement of the hearing. A reminder card was sent to all state paid child care providers and parents the week before the hearing

Manner of notifying the public about the statewide hearing:

Announcements of the child care state plan hearing were printed in the 12 major newspapers across the state.

Date(s) of public hearing(s):

The date of the public hearing was set for May 24, 2005 from 6:00 – 9:00 PM using the METNET interactive television system.

Hearing site(s):

Hearing sites included: Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Dillon, Glasgow, Glendive, Great Falls, Harlowton, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Lewistown, Miles City, Missoula, Sidney.

How the content of the plan was made available to the public in advance of the public hearing(s):

The draft state plan was posted on the Internet, or made available upon request of either the state office or the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

A brief summary of the public comments from this process is included as Attachment B.

2.3 Public-Private Partnerships

Describe (1) the activities, including planned activities, to encourage public-private partnerships that promote private-sector involvement in meeting child care needs, and (2) the results or expected results of these activities. (658D(b)(1), §98.16(d))

1. The Child Care Resource and Referral member agencies have developed enhanced resource and referral services that are available to local businesses. They are also instrumental in creating local public-private partnerships that encourage private-sector involvement in meeting child care needs. The CCR&R Network and twelve member agencies offer the following services to businesses across the state.
   - Employee child care needs assessment,
   - Business work-family self-assessment,
   - Community care resources assessment,
   - Employee child care cost-benefit analysis,
   - Review of employer child care options,
   - Information on employer tax benefits,
   - Child care referral services for employees seeking child care,
   - Child care payment assistance for low-income employees.

Results: The efforts of the Montana CCR&R network result in improved coordination among local CCR&R agency services and improved collaboration among CCR&R, early childhood professional organizations, businesses, and policy makers.

2. The lead agency contracts with twelve private non-profit child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies who perform a variety of tasks, which include the following:
   - Determine eligibility for state assisted child care services;
   - Link low income families to child are providers;
   - Process state paid child care provider payments;
   - Recruit new child care providers;
   - Provide training and technical assistance to child care providers;
   - Many sponsor the USDA/FNS Child and Adult Care Food Program for child care providers;
   - Consult with business to establish employer supported child care services;
   - Refer parent and providers to other agencies and programs;
   - Provide information about state assisted child care programs;
   - Offer parenting information and public education on child care issuers;
   - Assist in the development and promotion of policy initiatives, which expand and maintain the supply of quality child care in the local communities as well as on the state and national level.

   Results: The CCR&R agencies' efforts result in readily available, high quality early childhood ***services to child care providers*** that include:
   - New provider orientation and child care business training;
   - Access to a variety of training in all Knowledge Base areas;
   - Efficient communication between child care licensing and the CCR&R;
   - Access to early childhood technical assistance;
   - Access to professional early childhood trainers/consultants who have attained at least a Level 6 on the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path; and
   - Coordination and promotion of all other Best Beginnings programs available in Montana.

   The CCR&R agencies' efforts result in readily available, high quality early childhood ***services to families*** that include:
   - Referrals to child care providers that meet the parent's needs;
   - Accurate certification for child care scholarship assistance;
   - Accurate eligibility determination
   - Matching and approval services if a family wishes to use a "Legally Unregistered Provider" (family, friends, neighbors);
   - Accurate case maintenance and renewal services; and
   - Accurate and timely payment processing using the CCUBS system.

The CCR&R agencies' efforts result in readily available, high quality early childhood ***services to communities*** that include:

- Outreach to other community agencies regarding early childhood topics;
- Local consumer education; and
- The creation and publication of a Profile of Community Need.

3. The Department contracts with WoRC (Work Readiness Component) operators to help TANF families become self-sufficient through intensive case management, which includes training and employment related activities. WoRC program contractors are made up of a variety of agency types including:
   - Non-TANF State/county agencies (Job Service Centers, Board of County Commissioners)
   - Other
     i. Private Non-Profit Community Action Programs/Human Resource Development Councils,
     ii. Employment and Training entities – (Career Training Institute, Montana Peaks, Career Futures, Easter Seals)
     iii. Community Colleges

   The WoRC operators help families make informed decisions regarding the selection of a child care provider. WoRC case managers determine the amount of child care needed to support families while they participate in activities as part of a TANF Family Investment Agreement (FIA). They refer families to their local child care resource and referral agency who establishes the child care certification plan and assists in locating quality child care.

   Results: Participation in the WoRC program results in an increased job entry rate for TANF participants, a reduction in dependence upon TANF, cash assistance, and an increase in participant's self–sufficiency.

4. The lead agency uses the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council to help guide decision-making about services to families, administration of the fund, quality initiatives, and training. A wide spectrum of individuals (including foundations and business) is represented on the council (see 2.1 above for a complete listing of the MECAC membership).

   Results The MECAC is responsible for informing policy making for all aspects of Montana's CCDF programs. Including:
   - Providing guidance on subsidy program policy;
   - The creation, implementation and monitoring of all quality programs listed in Section 5 of this plan;
   - Legislative initiatives, either as a part of the Department's executive planning process or independent bills to support high quality early care and education in Montana.

- Collaborative partnerships in early care and education that are not primarily funded through the CCDF.

5. The Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, the Early Childhood Career Development Offices and MSU-Bozeman and Western Montana College of the University of Montana joined to create the Child Care Development Specialist apprenticeship. This program works with private businesses to train employees and create high quality services.

   The lead agency participates in a Public/Private partnership with child care programs participating in the child care apprentice program. Currently, 51 for-profit child care programs participate.

   Results: Employees who participate in the Montana Early Childhood Apprenticeship program earn a two-year Child Care Development Specialist Certificate. This certificate exceeds the requirements for CDA training and satisfies the early childhood requirements for an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood. An individual with a CDA is recognized at level three on the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path. An individual with a CCDS certificate is recognized as a level four on the Career Path. To date 111 individuals have completed the CCDS program. There are currently 71 individuals enrolled. The target enrollment for FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 is 10.

PART 3
CHILD CARE SERVICES OFFERED

3.1 Description of Child Care Services

3.1.1 Certificate Payment System

Describe the overall child care certificate process, including, at a minimum:
(1) a description of the form of the certificate (98.16(k));

Montana's certificate form (invoice) is included as Attachment 'C'. A Child Care Resource & Referral Eligibility Specialist determines the family's eligibility for the child care program through the Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) computer system. The family is notified of eligibility determination by mail. If a family does not have a provider, the family may select a provider at that time.

Once the parent selects a child care provider, the CCR&R worker enters the provider information into the CCUBS system. If the child care provider is licensed, registered, or legally unregistered, provider information is available to the CCR&R worker through an interface with the Child and Adult Protective Services (CAPS) computer system. Once the provider information is associated with the family, a child care certification plan is mailed to the parent and to the provider. The certification plan includes the child care provider's name, address, license information, the child(ren)'s name, age, authorized child care hours, and the date span for the certification.

Once the child care certification plan is issued to the parent, a provider billing certificate, or invoice, is mailed to the provider. The invoice is pre-printed with family, child, and provider information. The invoice is mailed to the provider by the 20th of the service month. The provider fills in the hours of care for the month and signs the invoice. The invoice is returned to the CCR&R for CCUBS processing. Payments are held for batch processing on the 5th business day of the month, and then processed each subsequent Tuesday. The provider or parent can expect to receive payment about two days following invoice processing. Also, providers may elect to make direct deposit arrangements and receive payment through electronic fund transfer.

(2) A description of how the certificate program permits parents to choose from a variety of child care settings by explaining how a parent moves from receipt of the certificate to choice of the provider; (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii), 658P(2), 98.2, 98.30(c)(4) & (e)(1) & (2)) and

A parent may choose any licensed child care center, any registered family or group child care home, a legally unregistered child care provider or a legally unregistered in-home to provide care for their children. If their current provider is none of the above, the provider may apply to become a legally unregistered provider.

Before a legally unregistered provider or legally unregistered in-home provider can receive payment for services, the prospective provider must apply at the district CCR&R agency and pass a child protective services and criminal records background check. If approved, payment is retroactive to the date the application is received in the local CCR&R agency. The provider certifies the facility meets health and safety requirements. Additionally, the provider must be 18 years old and must agree to attend an orientation within the first sixty days of being approved by the CCR&R.

Not every care arrangement qualifies for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. A child is NOT eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship if the child is related to the child's care provider in any of the following ways:

- The child's care provider is the child's parent;
- The child's care facility is owned, entirely or in part, by the parent;
- The child's care provider is a member of the child's TANF Cash assistance household;
- The child's care provider is a member of the child's Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship eligibility household; and
- If the child's care provider lives with the child, but not as a member of the child's eligibility household, the individual must qualify as a provider and be one of the following relatives:
    - Aunt or Uncle
    - Grandparent
    - Great Grand Parent.

No other household members qualify as care givers for the purpose of receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

(3) If the Lead Agency is also providing child care services through grants and contracts, estimate the mix of §98.50 services available through certificates versus grants/contracts, and explain how it ensures that parents offered child care services are given the option of receiving a child care certificate. (98.30(a) & (b)) This may be expressed in terms of dollars, number of slots, or percentages of services.

3.1.2 In addition to offering certificates, does the Lead Agency also have grants or contracts for child care slots?

☐ Yes, and the following describes the types of child care services, the process for accessing grants or contracts, and the range of providers that will be available through grants or contracts: (658A(b)(1), 658P(4), §§98.16(g)(1), 98.30(a)(1) & (b))

☒ No

3.1.3 The Lead Agency must allow for in-home care but may limit its use. Does the Lead Agency limit the use of in-home care in any way?

☒ Yes, and the limits and the reasons for those limits are: (§§98.16(g)(2), 98.30(e)(1)(iv))
A legally unregistered in-home provider (LUI) must meet all of the following conditions:

- Be 18 years of age, or older;
- Not be a parent or person acting in loco parentis;
- Not be included in the parent's cash assistance payment household;
- Not be included in the child care assistance household;
- Agree that the parent is the employer and is responsible for payment or that the person is an independent contractor;
- Be mentally and physically capable of providing child care that meets safety, health, and other basic child care requirements;
- Not have a substantiated report involving harm, physical or sexual abuse to children or adults;
- Agree to attend an orientation session within the sixty days of being approved for providing child care;
- Provide care to the children of one family or, if the children are from different families, may care for two or fewer children; and
- Pass criminal and child protective background checks.

In the case of a Legally Unregistered In-Home provider, all child care subsidy payments are made directly to the parent

☐ No

3.1.4 Are all of the child care services described in 3.1.1 above (including certificates) offered throughout the State? (658E(a), §98.16(g)(3))

☒ Yes
☐ No, and the following are the localities (political subdivisions) and the services that are not offered:

3.2 Payment Rates for the Provision of Child Care

The statute at 658E(c)(4) and the regulations at §98.43(b)(1) require the Lead Agency to establish payment rates for child care services that ensure eligible children equal access to comparable care.
These rates are provided as Attachment **D**.
The attached payment rates were or will be effective as of **August 1, 2006**

The following is a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that the attached rates are sufficient to ensure equal access to comparable child care services provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive child care assistance under the CCDF and other governmental programs. Include, at a minimum:

- The month and year when the local market rate survey(s) was completed: **June 2006** . (§98.43(b)(2))

- A copy of the Market Rate Survey instrument and a summary of the results of the survey are provided as Attachment **E**.

  Rates for Centers, Group and Family Homes are currently set at the 75th percentile of the 2006 Market Rate Survey. Because there is no "market" for Legally Unregistered Provider (LUP) or Legally Unregistered In-home (LUI) care, LUP/LUI rates are set at 75 percent of the corresponding Family Home rates.

  Montana allows payment for more than a full day of child care in a 24-hour period. A child care 'day' is defined as 6 to 10 hours. To accommodate families who must be away from their children longer than 10 hours a day, we pay an hourly rate for care in excess of 10 hours in one day. For care of 16 or more hours/day, we will pay another full day of child care in a 24-hour period.

  The Montana Statewide Rate is used when paying out-of-state child care facilities that serve Montana's children who are in out-of-state foster care placements and for providers licensed or registered in a neighboring state yet serving children who reside in Montana.

  Montana has established a rate system to serve children with special needs based upon the actual cost to care for the child. Once a child has been identified as having a special need, the CCR&R eligibility worker contacts the CCR&R early childhood specialist who completes a special needs rating scale with the parent. This scale has seven sections that focus on care requirements and needed accommodations for the child. This scale is used to determine whether the cost of care for the child with special needs warrants an increase rate over and above the normal district rate. These costs must be for accommodations that, in the absence of financial supports, would place an undue burden upon the provider. See **Attachment N**.

  Once the special needs rating scale is completed, the scale is sent to the Montana Inclusion Specialist located at Child Care Plus+, the Center for Inclusion in Early

Childhood at the University of Montana-Missoula, for approval. The Montana inclusion specialist has 10 days to either approve or deny the rate requested on the scale. Once the rate is approved, the CCR&R early childhood specialist has 60 days to complete an individual child care plan with the parent and possibly other pertinent individuals (e.g. Part C family support specialist, therapists, etc). This plan provides specific documentation of the child's need, identifies required accommodations, identifies additional resources which may be available, and suggests at least two individuals who could provide additional information, if needed

Montana requires child care providers to notify the State of their rates as a prerequisite to issuing payment for child care services. The Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) computer system looks for the provider rate before an invoice is processed. This procedure ensures that Montana is paying the provider's rate, if the District rate is higher than the provider's rate. It also ensures that Montana is informed of provider rates statewide.

Before the market rate survey analysis, Montana sends a letter to each child care provider, requesting that current rates be updated on CCUBS, through their local child care and referral agency. The letter points out the need for current rates, even if the provider does not currently serve subsidized children. A copy of the letter is found in Attachment '**F**.'

Montana conducted a market rate survey on June 30, 2006. Montana uses district rates to facilitate access to care in areas where families and providers experience a higher cost of living. Provider rate data is extracted from the Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) computer system and sorted by three categories for statistical analysis: 1) geographic location, 2) child care setting, and 3) type of child care. The next market rate survey will be conducted in 2007.

Child Care Resource & Referral District – see attachment 'A'	Child Care Setting	Type of Child Care
Billings Bozeman Butte Glasgow Glendive Great Falls Havre Helena Kalispell Lewistown Miles City Missoula Montana Out-of-State Rate *(Used for out-of-state child care facilities serving Montana foster care children and for providers licensed or registered in a neighboring state yet serving children who reside in Montana)*	Child Care Center Group Child Care Home Family Child Care Home Legally Unregistered Provider *(Includes in-home care)*	Age 2+, Daily Age 2+, Hourly Infant, Daily Infant, Hourly

- How the payment rates are adequate to ensure equal access based on the results of the above noted local market rate survey (i.e., the relationship between the attached payment rates and the market rates observed in the survey): (§98.43(b))

  In June of 2006, Montana chose to bring payment rates up to the 75th Percentile. As of August 1, 2006, rates are set at the 75th percentile of the June 30, 2006 Market Rate Survey. A family relying on a child care scholarship can afford services among seventy-five percent of the child care providers in each CCR&R district.

- Additional facts that the Lead Agency relies on to determine that its payment rates ensure equal access include: (§98.43(d))

  Montana has chosen to conduct a Market Rate Survey on an annual basis in order to be able to compare current rates with those that were established in June 2004. This comparison allows the department to determine whether families are still able to access and afford services among seventy-five percent of the providers in their area. If Montana determines that a particular district's rates have fallen below the 75th percentile, we have the option of changing rates in that area. After analysis of the 2005 market rate information, it was determined that families are still able to access and afford current rates. The Market Rate Survey was conducted again in June of 2006. At this time it was determined that a rate adjustment was needed to ensure equal access.

- If the payment rates do not reflect individual rates for the full range of providers -- center-based, group home, family and in-home care -- explain how the choice of the full range of providers is made available to parents.

  Current rates reflect individual rates for licensed center-based facilities, registered group and family homes, legally operating unregistered providers (LUP) and legally operating unregistered in-home care providers (LUI). Montana pays LUP and LUI providers 75% of the family home rate for the district. These rates are listed in **Attachment D.** See section 6.3.1 for additional information on legally operating providers.

- At what percentile of the current Market Rate Survey is the State rate ceiling set? If it varies across categories of care, please describe.

  As of August 1, 2006, rates are set at the 75th percentile of the June 30, 2006 Market Rate Survey.

- Does the State have a tiered reimbursement system (higher rates for child care centers and family child care homes that achieve one or more levels of quality beyond basic licensing requirements)?

  ☒ Yes. If yes, describe:

  Montana's Star Rating Program: Montana has chosen a three-level program that accommodates an intermediate step in quality improvement. Level one (one-star) consists of facilities that meet the requirements for a two or three year extended license, that comply with quality indicators in the area of staff training, parent involvement and child development; and level two (two-star) consists of facilities that meet the requirements for a two or three year extended license and are accredited by NAEYC, NAFCC or NSACA.

  Child care providers may qualify for increased subsidy rates by obtaining a one or two star rating by meeting requirements listed in the table below:

QUALITY INDICATOR	1-STAR REQUIREMENT (+ 10%)	2-STAR REQUIREMENT (+ 15%)
License Duration	2 or 3 year extended, Non-probationary license or registration	2 or 3 year extended, Non-probationary license or registration
Accreditation	Not accredited	Accredited by NAEYC, NAFCC, or NSACA

QUALITY INDICATOR	1-STAR REQUIREMENT (+ 10%)	2-STAR REQUIREMENT (+ 15%)
Staff Training	75% of Center (50% of Group) primary care giving staff at Level 2 or higher on the Career Path	75% of Center (50% of Group) primary care giving staff at Level 2 or higher, including one full-time staff at Level 3 or higher, on the Career Path.
Developmental Plan	Plan must be satisfactory	Automatically fulfilled by accreditation
Parental Involvement Plan	Plan must be satisfactory	Automatically fulfilled by accreditation
Personnel Policies	Plan must be satisfactory	Automatically fulfilled by accreditation

One-Star provider rates are increased 10% above the base rate. Two-Star provider rates are increased 15% above the base rate.

☐ No

3.3 Eligibility Criteria for Child Care

3.3.1 Complete column (a) and (b) in the matrix below. Complete Column (c) ONLY IF the Lead Agency is using income eligibility limits lower than 85% of the SMI).

3.3.2

			IF APPLICABLE	
	(a)	(b)	(c)	
Family Size	100% of State Median Income (SMI) ($/month)	85% of State Median Income (SMI) ($/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	Income Level, lower than 85% SMI, if used to limit eligibility (d) $/month	(e) % of SMI [Divide (d) by (a), multiply by 100]
1	$ 2129	$ 1810	$ 1,225	58%
2	$ 2784	$ 2366	$ 1,650	59%
3	$ 3439	$ 2923	$ 2,075	60%
4	$ 4094	$ 3480	$ 2,500	61%
5	$ 4749	$ 4037	$ 2,925	62%

If the Lead Agency does not use the SMI from the most current year, indicate the year used:

(a) State [of Montana] Median Income Estimate for Four Person Families (SFY 2005); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, State Median Income for a Four Person Family, Federal Register, Vol. 69, No 52, Friday, February 18, 2005.

(b) Montana sliding fee scale upper limits, at 150% of the federal poverty level. (**Attachment G**).

If applicable, the date on which the eligibility limits detailed in column (d) became or will become effective:

The date on which the eligibility limits detailed in column (d) will become effective is **August 1, 2006.**

3.3.2 How does the Lead Agency define "income" for the purposes of eligibility? Is any income deducted or excluded from total family income, for instance, work or medical expenses; child support paid to, or received from, other households; Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments? Is the income of all family members included, or is the income of certain family members living in the household excluded? Please describe and/or include information as **Attachment H**. (§§98.16(g)(5), 98.20(b))

Montana bases CCDF eligibility on gross family income, including all family members, yet excluding some types of income. Personal expenses are not deducted from gross income. Income exclusion may be based, in part, on the status of an individual in the household. For example, the earned income of a dependent child is excluded if the child is attending school. An income evaluation table is included as attachment **'H'**.

Additionally, the Administrative Rules of Montana require families with absent parents to verify court ordered child support income, or register with Child Support Enforcement, in an attempt to reduce the family's child care needs.

3.3.3 Has the Lead Agency established additional eligibility conditions or priority rules, for example, income limits that vary in different parts of the State, special eligibility for families receiving TANF, or eligibility that differs for families that include a child with special needs? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.16(g)(5), §98.20(b))

☐ Yes, and the additional eligibility criteria are: (Terms must be defined in Appendix 2)

☒ No

3.3.4 Has the Lead Agency elected to waive, on a case-by-case basis, the fee and income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services, as defined in Appendix 2? (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3)(C)(ii), §98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A))

☒ Yes, and the additional eligibility criteria are: (Terms must be defined in Appendix 2)
☐ No
☐ Not applicable. CCDF-funded child care is not provided in cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services.

3.3.5 Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care? (Physical and mental incapacity must then be defined in Appendix 2.) (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3), §98.20(a)(1)(ii))

☒ Yes, and the upper age is **18**.
☐ No

3.3.6 Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are under court supervision? (658P(3), 658E(c)(3)(B), §98.20(a)(1)(ii)

☒ Yes, and the upper age is **18**.
☐ No

3.3.7 Does the State choose to provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care whose foster care parents are not working, or who are not in education/training activities? (§§98.20(a)(3)(ii), 98.16(f)(7))

☒ Yes. (**NOTE**: This means that for CCDF purposes the State considers these children to be in protective services.)
☐ No

3.3.8 Does the State choose to provide child care to children in protective services? (§§98.16(f)(7), 98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A) & (B))

☒ Yes
☐ No

3.4 Priorities for Serving Children and Families

3.4.1 Describe how the State prioritizes service for the following CCDF-eligible children: (a) children with special needs, (b) children in families with very low incomes, and (c) other. Terms must be defined in Appendix 2. (658E(c)(3)(B))

(a) Child with Special Needs means a child who is age 18 or younger who requires additional assistance because of an emotional or physical disability and/or cognitive delay that is verified by medical records or other appropriate documentation such as written verification of the physical, emotional, or mental disability from the appropriate authority. Families of children with special needs are not placed on a waiting list, thereby guaranteeing a priority status for a child care scholarship. Child care providers are required to make a reasonable accommodation for children with special needs. If care requirements increase the cost of the care, one-time or ongoing costs may be paid from the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

(b) Children in families with very low income: A family, whose income is at or below the TANF eligibility threshold of the 2004 federal poverty guidelines, pays a $10.00 monthly co-payment. Higher co-payments are a product of the family's Non-TANF gross monthly income (GMI) multiplied by the respective co-payment factor: Monthly Co-payment = GMI x Percentage assigned to the Income Range.

3.4.2 Describe how CCDF funds will be used to meet the needs of: (a) families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), (b) those attempting to transition off TANF through work activities, and (c) those at risk of becoming dependent on TANF. (658E(c)(2)(H), Section 418(b)(2) of the Social Security Act, §§98.50(e), 98.16(g)(4))

(a) Families receiving TANF Cash are eligible for a child care subsidy, if the family makes arrangements at the child care resource and referral agency. Montana uses a process where the TANF Work Readiness Component (WoRC) Case Manager uses an electronic referral form to notify the CCR&R child care eligibility specialist that there is a need for child care for a TANF participant. This referral identifies the children in the household who require child care and the amount of child care needed so parents may complete their Employability Plans. The CCR&R enters the participant's information into CCUBS to certify care.

(b) When TANF is closed, the family must apply for Non-TANF Child Care assistance at the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. The CCR&R will interview the family to determine if the Fill-the-Gap policy

should be applied to insure continuity of care for the children. (See Section 4.1.1 for additional information on the Fill-the-Gap policy)

- The CCR&R will notify the family and child care provider at least ten days in advance of closing the TANF child care case.
- The CCR&R distributes a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application to the family
- If applicable, the CCR&R may determine the family is eligible for Fill-the-gap.

c) Low-income working families at or below 150% of poverty are considered at-risk of becoming dependent on TANF. The Sliding Fee Scale program is designed to assist these families in gaining access to and affording quality child care. The Sliding Fee Scale program helps families pay for child care while they are working, working and attending school, or attending high school or equivalency programs.

3.4.3 Does the Lead Agency maintain a waiting list?

☐ Yes. If yes, for what populations? Is the waiting list maintained at the State level? Are certain populations given priority for services, and if so, which populations? What methods are employed to keep the list current?

☒ No. If no, does the Lead Agency serve all eligible families that apply?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Are there other ways that the Lead Agency addresses situations in which funding is not sufficient to serve all families that are technically eligible under State policies? If so, describe.

When the demand for child care subsidy exceeds the CCDF budget, Montana implements a waiting list to limit entry to the child care program. Families are prioritized according to family size and income based on the 2005 federal poverty guidelines. Other cost containment strategies that can be implemented in times of reduced funding include: an increase in parental co-payments; a reduction in the eligibility ceiling (e.g. reducing the upper limits of eligibility from 150% of poverty to 125% of poverty); elimination of programs that enhance quality, etc.

Implementation of a waiting list is an option of last resort. The last time a waiting list occurred was in FY 2003. At the time a 37.6% reduction in funding was proposed. Whenever there is a potential reduction in funds, Montana will analyze the overall economic impact on families and the child care industry. Included below is the economic impact fact sheet that was prepared for the 2003 legislature.

3.5 Sliding Fee Scale for Child Care Services

3.5.1 A sliding fee scale, which is used to determine each family's contribution to the cost of child care, must vary based on income and the size of the family. A copy of this sliding fee scale for child care services and an explanation of how it works is provided as Attachment **G**.
The attached fee scale was or will be effective as of 8/1/2006.

Will the Lead Agency use additional factors to determine each family's contribution to the cost of child care? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.42(b))

☐ Yes, and the following describes any additional factors that will be used:

☒ No

3.5.2 Is the sliding fee scale provided in the attachment in response to question 3.5.1 used in all parts of the State? (658E(c)(3)(B))

☒ Yes

☐ No, and other scale(s) and their effective date(s) are provided as Attachment ___.

3.5.3 The Lead Agency may waive contributions from families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size, (§98.42(c)), and the poverty level used by the Lead Agency for a family of 3 is:
$ 1,383 monthly based on the 2006 FPG.

The Lead Agency must elect ONE of these options:

☐ ALL families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee.
☐ ALL families, including those with incomes at or below the poverty level for families of the same size, ARE required to pay a fee.
☒ SOME families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee. The following describes these families:

A family receiving child protective services may not be required to pay a fee. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.

3.5.4 Does the Lead Agency have a policy that prohibits a child care provider from charging families any unsubsidized portion of the provider's normal fees (in addition to the contributions discussed in 3.5.1)? (§98.43(b)(3))
☐ Yes. Please describe:

☒ No.

3.5.5 The following is an explanation of how the copayments required by the Lead Agency's sliding fee scale(s) are affordable: (§98.43(b)(3))

Montana Child Care Sliding Fee Scale is provided as Attachment '**G**'.

Montana's sliding fee scale was designed so that the co-payment matrix did not contain huge cliffs for families, either within the income categories for the scale or when families' income increases so that they lose eligibility.

Families, who receive cash assistance under TANF programs and utilize child care so they may participate in required Family Investment Activities (FIA), pay a ten-dollar co-payment. A ten-dollar co-payment also applies to non-TANF families whose incomes are below the TANF eligibility threshold.

Families above the TANF eligibility threshold pay co-payments ranging between 1% and 14% of their gross monthly income (GMI). The percentage of their gross monthly income (GMI) increases as they approach 150% of the 2006 FPG. For every five percent increase of GMI, co-payment rates increase

one percent. At the upper end of the scale, 14% of the GMI approaches the average cost of subsidy ($474.56/mo) for one family.

For example, a single parent family with one child, whose GMI is 150% of the 2006 FPG, will pay 20% of their GMI in child care costs if they do not have assistance. A two-parent family with one child will pay 21% of their GMI. The higher co-payment at the upper limit of the sliding fee scale minimizes the cliff that families experience when leaving the program. Serving families over 150% of the FPG is problematic, because wages are low (Avg. $2,327 per month for private production workers, 2005), the demand for child care is high, and child care subsidy funds are limited.

Currently 81% of the families who participate in the Montana Sliding Fee Scale program pay 7% or less of their GMI as a child care co-payment. Furthermore, 61.5% of the families who participate in the Montana Sliding Fee Scale program pay 3% or less of their GMI as a childcare co-payment. In contrast, only 3% of the families pay a co-payment of 14% of their GMI.

PART 4
PROCESSES WITH PARENTS

4.1 Application Process / Parental Choice

4.1.1 The following describes the process for a family to apply for and receive child care services (658D(b)(1)(A), 658E(c)(2)(D) & (3)(B), §§98.16(k), 98.30(a) through (e)). If the process varies for families based on eligibility category, for instance, TANF versus non-TANF, please describe. The description should include:

- How parents are informed of the availability of child care services and about child care options

Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies are responsible for assisting families to choose and locate childcare that meets their needs. No fee may be charged for a basic referral to low-income families who qualify for assistance or families participating in the state's TANF cash assistance program. A basic referral listing will include the following:

- Program/provider name;
- Location (actual address is optional);
- Telephone number;
- Age range of children;
- Facility type;
- Days/hours of business; and
- The CCR&R Network Disclaimer.

Consumer education materials shall be included in a basic referral. These materials include:

- Information on choosing quality child care;
- CCR&R agency services;
- Child development information tailored to the family; and
- State-paid child care assistance information.

Information regarding the sliding fee scale program is included in every referral packet. The CCR&R referral specialist may also consult with parents seeking child care. During this time the referral specialist will review a brochure concerning the sliding fee scale and complete a cursory assessment to determine if the family may be eligible. If it appears that the family is eligible, the CCR&R referral specialist would direct the family to talk to an eligibility specialist in order to complete an application for the sliding fee scale program.

Brochures concerning the sliding fee scale program are available at a variety of other human service offices including the local TANF and

WoRC program offices. These brochures are also available for local child care providers to use with parents when they become aware that a child may be eligible for a scholarship.

- Where/how applications are made

  Applications for child care assistance are available at all of the CCR&R and TANF/WoRC program offices. A family may apply for child care assistance in person, by mail, or by fax through one of the Child Care Resource & Referral agencies within the state. Applicants must complete the application, provide necessary eligibility documentation; and submit the application to the CCR&R for processing. The child care assistance eligibility begin-date is the date the completed application demonstrates eligibility, including the need for child care, due to the parent's activity hours.

- Who makes the eligibility determination

Families participating in Montana's TANF Cash program are eligible for child care services while participating in required activities. County Offices of Public Assistance (OPA) Case Managers determine financial eligibility for TANF cash assistance. After disregards, TANF Cash family income is at, or below, approximately 30% of the federal poverty guidelines. Families who need child care in support of TANF Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan activities are referred to the district Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency by the Work Readiness Component (WoRC) Operator contractors.

The CCR&R staff refers families to licensed or registered child care providers with openings. If a family has specific requirements for a provider, for example, they wish their provider to be located in a specific location, the CCR&R, using a computer based referral system, can prepare a list of providers who might meet the family's needs.

Should a family choose an individual to serve as a legally unregistered provider (LUP) or legally unregistered in-home (LUI) provider, the CCR&R can explain and expedite the application process to the family and LUP/LUI applicant.

Once families lose eligibility for TANF cash assistance, because of increased income from employment, they are referred to the district CCR&R Agency. The CCR&R determines eligibility for non-TANF child care services and helps families locate child care providers.

If a family was never eligible for TANF benefits and is currently at risk of becoming a TANF Cash recipient, they may learn about available child care services through the following sources:

- Child care providers with grants and contracts;

- Child protective services social workers;
- WoRC Operators;
- Child care brochures available in CCR&R offices, county human services offices, and WoRC Program contractors;
- Word of Mouth;
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Sponsors and CACFP Centers;
- DPHHS Child Care Licensors;
- DPHHS Web Page;
- DPHHS Virtual Human Services Pavilion; and
- Consumer education campaigns.

Parents qualifying for child care assistance participate in one of these general activities:

- Employed, and meeting the minimum hourly requirement; or
- Employed and attending school or a training program; or
- A teen parent attending high school, GED, or equivalency program.

To be eligible for non-TANF child care assistance, parents must be employed at paid legal labor or self-employed, and meet a minimum hourly work requirement each month. Two-parent families shall work a minimum of 120 hours per month with either or both parents working any combination of hours. Single parent families shall work a minimum of 60 hours per month. Single-parent families shall work a minimum of 40 hours per month while the parent attends school or training full-time, based on the school's guidelines.

In addition to minimum work/school hour requirements, families have child support requirements, which are enforced to receive child care assistance. Families are required to be in-compliance with the DPHHS Child Support Enforcement Division, have a court order in place and be receiving child support through the court order, or be granted good cause for not cooperating with child support.

- How parents who receive TANF benefits are informed about the exception to individual penalties as described in 4.4

Families participating in the TANF program are not sanctioned due to lack of child care, as noted in section 4.4 of this plan. When child care is not available, TANF eligibility managers and parents negotiate activities that do not require child care to maintain their family investment agreement. Child care is identified as a good-cause exception for families unable to complete TANF activities. If a parent is involved in the TANF sanction process, the parent is informed in writing of the right to claim good-cause.

- Length of eligibility period including variations that relate to the services provided, e.g., through collaborations with Head Start or pre-kindergarten programs

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies prospect a family's eligibility (150% FPG) and issue a child care certification plan for up to six months. Certification plans may be shorter if prospective eligibility determination predicts a change in the family's circumstances that affects their basic eligibility. Families are eligible for non-TANF child care services for the entire 6-month period, until one of the following occurs:

- A family enters the TANF program.
- Household composition changes, eliminating the need for child care.
- Earnings exceed the limits of the sliding fee scale, when the family re-certifies.
- Work hours decrease and cause a family to fall below the minimum work requirement (120 hours/month for two parent family, 60 hours/month for single parent family or 40hours/month for a single parent attending school full time).
- A teen student/parent leaves high school.
- Unemployment continues past the grace period.

Department social workers determine the need for child protective services child care and use the CCR&R services to help families locate child care providers.

- Any steps the State has taken to reduce barriers to initial and continuing eligibility for child care subsidies

Montana policies are designed to maintain the parent's eligibility, meet the need for additional child care, and continuity of care for children. The following policies reduce barriers and maintain eligibility for families:

- Presumptive Eligibility – If funding is available and a family's initial application indicates the family is eligible; the family may receive child care for up to 30 days, while eligibility is verified. This ensures payment to the provider while the family's eligibility is being confirmed.
- Certified Enrollment – A child with a full-time certification plans have 150 hours to use when the provider requires payment during the child's absence.
- Extending Child Care Hours – Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have the ability to issue additional benefits to cover the parent's unanticipated work or school hours, when the need is verified.
- Fill-the-Gap – allows WoRC Case managers and CCR&R Eligibility Specialists to provide a child care subsidy to a TANF family who needs child care because circumstances have changed and the child care disregard has not been prospected.
- Grace Period – A family who loses employment may continue to receive benefits for 30 days, if they agree to use the time to gain employment. This

grace period allows families to maintain eligibility while providing children with continuity of care.

- Hold-the Slot – A family may pre-arrange to temporarily maintain a child's enrollment for an absence of not more than 30 days.
- Holidays – Some child care providers charge families for holidays, when children are not in attendance. Montana helps parents meet this obligation by allowing providers to claim holidays when billing for services.
- Medical Appointments – A parent who meets activity/work requirements may use child care benefits to attend medical appointments.
- Medical Emergency - When work is interrupted by a medical emergency involving the parent or a child, the parent may be able to maintain needed child care during the emergency.
- Suspending a Case – A family who temporarily loses eligibility may remain in the program for 30 days.

4.1.2 The following is a detailed description of how the State ensures that parents are informed about their ability to choose from among family and group home care, center-based care and in-home care including faith-based providers in each of these categories.

Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies are responsible for assisting families to choose and locate childcare that meets their needs. The CCR&R Agency must maintain, and update monthly, the NACCRRAWARE database to include local childcare facilities, Head Start centers and pre-schools. NACCRRAWARE is capable of handling local childcare information and producing reports on the local number of families seeking care, the number of openings, the type of care needed, provider turnover rate and other relevant data. The CCR&R Agency will conduct initial meetings with parents in order to determine families' needs and to provide information that will help parents evaluate quality of care. The following information will be provided upon request when conducting a referral:

- Types of childcare programs
- Local market rate information
- Location of child care program
- Hours of available care
- Licensing and registration requirements
- Information about transportation to childcare facilities
- Consumer education about selecting childcare
- Information about child development
- A checklist that identifies quality child care services.

Referral services and parent education will be provided as requested by DPHHS for parents who are served by the CPS child care program. Families with special needs children will be given the same array of referral services as families with typically developing children in accordance with ADA. Special care arrangements or accommodations will be worked out between the parent and

provider (and family service specialist in accordance with the child's IFSP or IEP if one is available). Referral services will be available in all of the counties and rural communities of each CCR&R district, as established by the state of Montana.

4.2 Records of Parental Complaints

The following is a detailed description of how the State maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and how it makes the information regarding such parental complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C), §98.32))

Purpose

Federal Regulations, [45 CFR 98.32, 1998] require that a procedure for maintaining substantiated parental complaints be adopted by the Department as grantee of the Child Day Care Block Grant. This information MUST to be available to the public upon request. The following procedure for making and documenting referrals applies to the department staff and to Resource and Referral Agencies that contract with DPHHS.

Definitions

Complaint: the process by which a parent, guardian, or other interested individual, reports concerns regarding licensing violations or the care received by a child from a child day care provider.

Department: Department of Public Health & Human Services

Validated Complaint: upon completion of an investigation the Child Care Licensing staff and/or Community Social Worker determines that the allegations of the complaint occurred or are occurring.

Not Validated Complaint: upon completion of the investigation, the Child Care Licensing staff and/or Community Social Worker determines that the allegations of the complaint did not occur, or is unable to make a determination due to lack of evidence.

CPS: child protective services.

CCL: the Child Care Licensing Staff of the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

CCR&R: the district Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.

CAN: child abuse and neglect.

Procedure

Complaints may be reported either to the local DPHHS child

protection office, DPHHS licensing staff, or to a CCR&R agency. When a complaint is received by the Department, staff will obtain from the caller information about the incident and the name and phone number of both the complainant and the provider about whom they are making the complaint.

DPHHS ACTION

If the complaint is a child protection issue, the DPHHS CPS unit will conduct an investigation. The investigating worker shall confer with the CCL their initial findings, and if necessary, make a formal request for negative licensing action pending the completion of the investigation.

The licensing program may decide to conduct a separate licensing investigation or conduct a joint investigation with the CPS social worker. If any negative licensing action is taken, the CCL will notify the local CCR&R to inform them of the action taken.

Types of Complaints

Complaints received will be documented according to the following two classifications:

1. child protection (CPS); and
2. licensing and registration issues.

A child protection (CPS) complaint refers to a complaint regarding abuse or neglect of a child. This means that acts or omissions of a child's parent or other person responsible for the child may harm or threaten to harm the normal physical or mental health or welfare of a child. (41-3-102 MCA.) All reports of suspected abuse or neglect of a child must be reported by the CCR&R agency to the local CPS office.

A complaint regarding licensing issues refers to concerns, other than CPS complaints, regarding alleged violations of child day care facility standards, requirements, regulations, and the direct care of children at the child day care facility.

CCR&R Action

Ideally, CCR&R Programs should not receive CPS complaints;

However, when a call is made to the CCR&R agency office the staff person obtains all available information and documents that information. If the complaint is a child protection complaint, the caller shall be encouraged to personally report the incident to department and is given the appropriate names and phone numbers to call. If the caller is a professional person legally mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect, (i.e. doctor, teacher, day

care staff) CCR&R agency staff will inform the caller that by law the referral must be made to the local child protection office.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the CCR&R agency staff will forward a copy of the complaint to the appropriate agency contact: for licensing issues the information will be sent to the local CCL and for CPS issues, information will be forwarded to the CPS intake unit for appropriate intervention. Referral of complaints will be made to DPHHS by phone with a follow-up in writing within 72 hours.

If there is a question whether the reported complaint is child protection or licensing, **it will be first treated as a child protection complaint**. Copies of the complaint will be automatically forwarded from the CCR&R office to the local CPS Intake Unit. The local child care licensing staff will also receive a copy for review of appropriate licensing regulations.

Removal from referral list

To prevent inadvertent referrals to an inappropriate provider, the CCR&R will be notified in writing of any negative licensing action (e.g. suspension, denial, revocation, etc.) taken against a day care provider.

Depending upon the results of the investigation, a child care provider can be removed from the referral listing upon request by the child care licensor or other designated department staff.

A provider can be removed from the CCR&R Referral list for the following reasons:

- If the provider is under investigation by CPS;
- If the provider is under investigation by Child Care Licensing;
- If negative licensing has occurred as a result of either a CPS or Licensing investigation or
- As a result of other investigative findings which result in serious licensing concerns, but do not mitigate negative licensing action.

Facilities with no current, valid registration or license shall not be referred. However, CCR&R agencies do offer referrals to LEGALLY OPERATING programs, such as preschools, after-school programs, etc, who may not be required by law to obtain a license or registration.

The provider's facility will not be referred by the CCR&R until

they have had contact from the CCL requesting referrals resume, or until the registration or license is restored to a regular status.

It is the responsibility of the Child Care Licensor to inform the child care provider his/her name has been removed from the referral listing.

Requests for information from the public

Any person wishing to know the status of a day care facility's license or registration certificate may call the local DPHHS office or District Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

If negative licensing action has been taken against a day care facility, the public can be informed:

That a license has been reduced to a provisional or restricted status;

That a license has been suspended or revoked, pending the completion of a corrective action plan;

The name of provider; and/or

Phone number of provider.

Substantiated complaints against a licensed or registered facility may be disclosed to a person requesting information on that facility. The nature of the substantiated complaint (e.g., leaving child unattended, lack of supervision) may be shared but names or specific details **may not** be disclosed. In cases when a complaint is made, but is unsubstantiated upon investigation, information pertaining to the nature of the allegations shall not be shared.

Confidentiality

Any information a caller gives in regard to a complaint must be considered confidential. Information is not to be discussed with other persons unless authorized by department policy or Montana law i.e., licensing staff, child protection workers, etc.

In regard to informing Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies of licensing actions, the DPHHS worker may reveal that an investigation is ongoing. The department will notify the CCR&R that a license has been reduced to provisional, restricted, or suspended status pending completion of corrective action plan, or that the license has been revoked.

When a referral regarding licensing regulations is substantiated and the allegations do not relate to child abuse or neglect as defined in

41-3-102 MCA, the licensing worker shall inform the CCR&R of the substantiated referral.

If as a result of investigative findings, the department determines that services under the Training and Technical Assistance program offered by the CCR&R agency are necessary, the Child Care licensor will share with the CCR&R staff the non-compliances found and an appropriate course or training will be developed. This information is to be considered confidential by CCR&R staff.

CCR&R staff shall not reveal details of any case involving child abuse or neglect or of licensing actions. Requests for details of licensing actions are to be referred to the local licensing office. All names of the child(ren) and the family must be deleted from the register that is available to the public.

Reference 45 CFR 98.5 (f)
Section 41-3-201, MCA
Section 41-3-205, MCA

This version of this policy is what exists in the Licensing Program Policy Manual. However, the policy is currently being revised, but has not been approved by QAD management.

4.3 Unlimited Access to Children in Child Care Settings

The following is a detailed description of the procedures in effect in the State for affording parents unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds. (658E(c)(2)(B), §98.31))

Unless prohibited by court order, the Administrative Rules of Montana rule require parents or guardians to have unlimited access to the day care facility during day care hours. However, recently, personal safety issues have redefined this requirement. Under current licensing policy providers are allowed to lock the facility door as long as the door is equipped with a single action lock. The installation of this lock, however, cannot prohibit access by parents. It is the provider's responsibility if one of these approved devices are used. to adequately inform parents and make appropriate arrangements with the parents to be able to access their children at any time.

Parents are informed of their right to access their child when they apply for benefits. Parents read and initial several statements on a 'Family's Rights & Responsibilities' form, including, "I have a right to have access at any time while he/she's at child care."

4.4 Criteria or Definitions Applied by TANF Agency to Determine Inability to Obtain Child Care

The regulations at §98.33(b) require the Lead Agency to inform parents who receive TANF benefits about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the work requirement for any single custodial parent who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care for a child under 6 years of age.

In fulfilling this requirement, the following criteria or definitions are applied by the TANF agency to determine whether the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care:

NOTE: The TANF agency, not the Child Care Lead Agency, is responsible for establishing the following criteria or definitions. These criteria or definitions are offered in this Plan as a matter of public record. The TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions is: **the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Public Assistance Bureau.**

- "Appropriate child care": The child care provider meets applicable state standards.

- "Reasonable distance":
  a) If the family is without either their own (or arranged) transportation, and there is no public transportation, then their home or work site must be no more than 1 mile from the child care provider.
  b) If the family has their own (or arranged) transportation, their home or work site is within one-hour travel distance, one-way, from the child care provider.

- "Unsuitability of informal child care": Care that does not met applicable state licensing standards, although it may be the parent's choice.

- "Affordable child care arrangements": The total parental (caretaker relative or person acting in loco parentis) co-payment and "above and beyond" obligation does not exceed 25% of gross family income.

PART 5
ACTIVITIES & SERVICES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE

5.1 Quality Earmarks and Set-Asides

5.1.1 The Child Care and Development Fund provides earmarks for infant and toddler care and school-age care and resource and referral services as well as the special earmark for quality activities. The following describes the activities; identifies the entities providing the activities; and describes the expected results of the activities. For the infant and toddler earmark, the State must note in its description of the activities what is the maximum age of a child who may be served with such earmarked funds.

Infants and toddlers:
Montana funds five primary activities through the Infant/Toddler Earmark.

1. **Infant Toddler Caregiver Certification:**
   Montana has created an Infant/Toddler Caregiver certification. A child care provider certified as an infant toddler care giver must complete one of the following training requirements:
   - The Infant Toddler CDA
   - The Family Child Care CDA + 30 hours of Infant/Toddler coursework
   - The complete, four-module, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (minimum of 60 hours of instruction).
   - A Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship that includes 30-hours of Infant/Toddler coursework.
   - An AA Degree in Early Childhood that includes 30 hours of Infant Toddler coursework
   - BA Degree in Early Childhood that includes 30 hours of Infant Toddler coursework.

   The certification training is available to all caregivers statewide to improve the quality of care for young children.

2. **Infant Toddler Trainer Certification:**
   The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (WestEd) serves as the basic Infant/Toddler curriculum. This program is offered on a regular basis throughout the state. Instructors certified through WestEd provide the Department a training plan that includes an on-site observation component for each student's program. Montana has approximately twelve WestEd certified trainers who offer the four- module (60 hr) coursework.

   Certified trainers receive annual advanced training in Infant Toddler curriculum. This training is offered through Western Montana College of the

University of Montana and is based on the latest research in the area of infant/toddler development; as well as, adult education techniques.

3. **The Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Stipend Program** is offered to help reduce the turnover of infant toddler certified caregivers in early childhood programs. The goal of this stipend is to maximize the continuity of care for as many infants and toddlers as possible in child care settings.
   - Any Montana certified infant toddler caregiver who is working a minimum of 5 hours per day (M-F) providing direct care to infants and/or toddlers (0-36 months of age) in a licensed/registered facility may apply for the stipend program. Additionally, the certified infant toddler caregiver must be an active participant of the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry at any level on the Career Path.
   - Program participants must maintain continuous employment with the same licensed or registered child care facility for the 18-month period beginning either January 1 or July 1 to receive the total stipend of $1,600.
   - Stipends are awarded in six-month increments and paid directly to the Montana certified infant toddler caregiver. A stipend is paid following the completion of each six-month period and must be requested within 30 days of the end of each six-month period.
   - Participants must provide direct care to infants/toddlers in the same licensed/registered child care facility for the majority of time the infants or toddlers the caregiver is responsible for attends.

4. **The Best Beginnings Infant Toddler Mini Grant Program.**
   These mini grants are designed to cover cost of infant/toddler training, infant/toddler developmentally appropriate equipment, supplies, and/or meeting infant/toddler regulatory requirements. The goal of the Infant/Toddler Mini Grant is to improve the quality of care available for infants and toddlers. Maximum awards are $1,500 for licensed child care centers and $1,000 for registered group and family child care homes.

5. **Infant Toddler Merit Pay program -** Developed with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to infants and toddlers by encouraging child care providers and care givers to participate in additional training. Early childhood professionals who work a minimum or 15 hours a week in a registered group or family child care home or a licensed child care center may apply to participate in pre-approved infant toddler training that leads to certification as a Montana Certified Infant/Toddler Caregiver. Applicants must be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry.

   Early childhood professionals must be working a minimum of 15 hours a week in:
   - A registered group or family child care home,
   - A licensed child care center,

- A Montana Head Start, Early Head Start or Tribal Head Start, or
- A Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Agency.

Applicants must also be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry. Qualifying individuals who are in the process of applying for child care licensure or registration may apply for Infant Toddler Merit Pay; however, award funds will not be released unless the licensure/registration process is completed. Infant Toddler Merit Pay will be awarded to approved applicants completing all four modules of the Infant Toddler training, who then attain Montana Infant Toddler Caregiver Certification.

Montana is in the preliminary stages of funding an additional activity through the infant/toddler earmark. An RFP to establish programs for Infant/Toddler Mentoring was issued in June of 2005. New contracts will begin in October of 2005

The Best Beginnings Infant Toddler Mentoring Program
The goal of this program is to establish and support "mentoring programs" in infant toddler care giving that match experienced Montana certified infant/toddler trainer/caregivers "mentors" with novice infant toddler caregivers "protégés". Mentoring programs should be based on the concept that an intensive, one-on-one approach produces measurable change in caregiver behavior and the quality of care that these caregivers provide.

Resource and Referral Services:

DPHHS contracts with the Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network to utilize earmarked funds to enhance the statewide community-based services offered by the MCCR&R Network's 12 member agencies.

The MCCR&R Network, in collaboration with the DPHHS Early Childhood Services Bureau, has targeted two priority areas of service. These are the School-Age Care Project and Network Services.

- The purpose of MCCR&R Network Services is to build state level collaboration between child care, health and education organizations in order to promote quality, availability and access to child care; to support standardization and improvement of local child care resource and referral services; to collect and report state level child care data; and to increase public awareness of child care as an economic development issue. In this capacity MCCR&R sponsors quarterly meetings of 12 member agency coordinators, an annual CCR&R Staff Training Conference, staff training in NACCRRAware referral software and CCUBS subsidy program, annual reporting of licensed child care capacity, caregiver employment, subsidy payment, and distribution of Best Beginnings Child Care Quality Improvement funds by county.

School-age child care:

- The purpose of the School-Age Care Project is to bring licensed and legally unlicensed school-age care services into coordination with other local and state level afterschool initiatives including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and 4-H. Through coordination of the Montana Afterschool Network, MCCR&R works to improve the availability and quality of school-age care statewide. MCCR&R sponsors afterschool caregiver training events, state level collaboration meetings, and public outreach and awareness activities. MCCR&R publishes annual Afterschool Supply & Demand Maps, a bi-annual newsletter, e-mail updates to the field, and an afterschool website.

5.1.2 The law requires that not less than 4% of the CCDF be set aside for quality activities. (658E(c)(3)(B), 658G, §§98.13(a), 98.16(h), 98.51) The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount and percentage will be used for the quality activities (not including earmarked funds):

$ 876,801 (4 %)

5.1.3 Check either "Yes" or "No" for each activity listed to indicate the activities the Lead Agency will undertake to improve the availability and quality of child care (include activities funded through the 4% quality set-aside as well as the special earmark for quality activities). (658D(b)(1)(D), 658E(c)(3)(B), §§98.13(a), 98.16(h))

	Yes	No
• Comprehensive consumer education	☒	☐
• Grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting State and local standards	☒	☐
• Monitoring compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements	☐	☒
• Professional development, including training, education, and technical assistance	☒	☐
• Improving salaries and other compensation for child care providers	☒	☐
• Activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development	☒	☐
• Activities to promote inclusive child care	☒	☐
• Healthy Child Care America and other health activities including those designed to promote the social and emotional development of children	☐	☒
• Other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care. (§98.51(a)(1) and (2))	☒	☐

5.1.4 Describe each activity that is checked "Yes" above, identify the entity(ies) providing the activity, and describe the expected results of the activity.

- Comprehensive consumer education

Banik Creative Group – Other – Private for profit agency
Montana contracts with Banik Creative Group, located in Great Falls, MT, to coordinate, develop and manage the early childhood consumer education campaign that focuses on the importance and benefits of choosing quality child care. This campaign targets families, employers and communities at large throughout Montana. Banik Creative Group has designed the window clings that

are displayed by all licensed and registered providers. They have also designed the Star Quality and BLOCKS logos that are displayed by all one-star and two-star quality licensed/registered providers throughout the state to let parents know that the facility offers high quality child care services. Banik Creative Group is currently working with the Early Childhood Services Bureau/DPHHS to develop a website that will have information and links for families and early care and education practitioners to access current information, forms, available training and other information related to quality early care and education.

Montana will continue to utilize the following methods of providing comprehensive consumer education to families and child care providers:

- Parent counseling is provided by Resource and Referral agencies.
- Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, local Offices of Public Assistance, WoRC program offices, and Child and Family Services offices provide information regarding subsidized child care.
- Licensed or registered child care providers lists are Maintained on the Department of Public Health and Human Services "Virtual Pavilion: http://vhsp.dphhs.state.mt.us
- Brochures, booklets, and other written material related to high quality of care are available and distributed throughout the State of Montana.
- Distribution of child care regulatory information.
- Complaint policies and procedures are included in the child care provider handbook. This information is covered in all new provider orientation.
- Mass media such as television, radio, Internet sites, and billboards in collaboration with National child care awareness campaigns.
- Public meetings and conferencing via METNET, Montana's interactive telecommunication system.

Results: This effort results in increased public awareness regarding:

- The importance of the early years, and
- the importance of parental recognition and use of high quality child care.

- Grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting State and local standards

Child Care Providers

Provider Grants - Best Beginnings offers annual grants to licensed and registered child care providers to enhance or develop quality child care programs while expanding and improving access to quality child care for low income families. These grants may be renewed on an annual basis for a period of up to three years based on performance. To be eligible to participate child care providers must be participating in the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry and have achieved a Level III or higher on the Career Path. Maximum grant awards for licensed centers is $15,000, registered group child care homes is $10,000 and $5,000 for registered family child care homes. Grants are awarded to providers who demonstrate a strong link to professionalism in the field of early childhood; a

commitment to providing high quality care in safe and healthy environments; and a commitment to the development and retention of highly skilled and knowledgeable staff.

Results:

- Increased numbers of accredited facilities
- Increased access for low income children to high quality facilities

Child Care Providers

Mini Grants - Best Beginnings offers Child Care Mini Grants that are quick and easy for child care providers to apply for at any time during the year and are awarded on a quarterly basis. Licensed or registered child care providers must be participating in the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioners Registry and can be at any level on the Career Path. These funds may be used to replace or acquire equipment, purchase developmentally appropriate toys and/or supplies, meet regulatory requirements, and to hire substitute care to enable provider and/or staff to attend trainings, conferences and/or workshops. Maximum awards are $1,500 for licensed child care centers and $1,000 for registered group and family child care homes.

Results:

- Improvement in the quality of services offered by a large number of providers in basic Knowledge Base areas, particularly Environmental Design, Health Safety and Nutrition, and Curriculum.
- Increased participation in the professional development system.

- Professional development, including training, education, and technical assistance

Child Care Providers

Merit Pay 1 – The Montana Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Merit Pay 1 program was developed with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to young children, by supporting early childhood professionals participating in an early childhood/child development training and education.

Early childhood professionals must be working a minimum of 15 hours a week in:

- A registered group or family child care home,
- A licensed child care center,

Applicants must also be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry.

Qualifying individuals who are in the process of applying for child care licensure or registration may apply for Merit Pay 1; however, award funds will not be released unless the licensure/registration process is completed. (The establishment of a PV number in CCUBS provides the necessary verification.)

Merit Pay 1 will be awarded to approved applicants participating in one of two tracks:

- A 23-hour Track. (Participants completing and verifying 23 hours of pre-approved early childhood training will receive an award of $250.00)
- A 50-hour Track. (Participants completing and verifying 50 hours of pre-approved early childhood training will receive an award of $500.00)

Individuals may only apply for one Merit Pay program; multiple applications will be automatically denied. Additionally, applicants must indicate which Merit Pay 1 track (23-hour or 50-hour) they wish to participate in.

The Merit Pay 1 application and Plan of Study are submitted to DPHHS/ECSB for approval. Applicants are selected for participation in the Merit Pay 1 program, based upon the content and quality of their application, their priority ranking and availability of funds.

If a participant does not complete the approved Plan of Study required for the Merit Pay 1, she/he will not receive the Merit Pay 1 award.

All training and education must address one or more components of the Early Childhood Knowledge Base. The Early Childhood Knowledge Base describes the early childhood competencies an early childhood professional must possess in order to offer high quality early care and education. Training and education may include:

1. Child Development Associate (CDA) training,
2. Workshop sessions or other non-credit bearing, early childhood training approved through the Montana Early Care & Education Career Development Training Approval System,
3. Child and Adult Care Food Program training in excess of the four hours required for participation in that program, as long as the training has been approved through the Montana Early Care & Education Career Development Training Approval System.

The eight hours of training required as a condition of licensure or registration, or to qualify to be an aid or a teacher, in a center is allowed. The hours associated with CPR/First Aid do not count toward the eight hours of mandatory licensing tainting and will not be counted for Merit Pay 1.

Merit Pay 1 priority will be given to participants who:

- Early childhood professionals who have not previously received the award and are participating in training that leads to completion of a credential such as a Child Development Associate, (CDA), or accreditation through the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCCA) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

- Early childhood professionals who have not previously received Merit Pay I, who have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field, and who are participating in training in one or more of the Montana Early Care & Education Knowledge Base content areas.
- Early childhood professionals who have previously received a Merit Pay award and are participating in training that leads to completion of a credential, such as a CDA or accreditation through the National Association of Family Child Care.
- Early childhood professionals who have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and who have received Merit Pay in the past, who are completing appropriate early care and education training.
- Early childhood professionals who have completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field.

Note: A credential is defined as a Child Development Associate (CDA), accreditation, Child Care Development Specialist (CCDS) Apprenticeship, an Associates of Arts (AA) degree, a Bachelor of Arts

Results

- Individual caregivers participate in approved training that exceeds the minimum 8-hour annual training required of employees in licensed or registered centers and family homes.
- Increased participation in the professional development system and career path.

Child Care Providers

Higher Education Merit Pay - this program was developed with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to young children, by supporting early childhood professionals who are enrolled in an early childhood/child development college based program

Early childhood professionals must be working a minimum of 15 hours a week in:

- A registered group or family child care home,
- A licensed child care center,
- A Montana Head Start, Early Head Start or Tribal Head Start, or
- A Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Agency.

Applicants must also be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry. Qualifying individuals who are in the process of applying for child care licensure or registration may apply for Higher Ed. Merit Pay; however, award funds will not be released unless the licensure/registration process is completed.

Higher Education Merit Pay will be awarded to approved applicants participating in at least six college credits per semester. Individuals may receive this award in

each of two semesters per year for an award of $750.00 per semester and a maximum award of $1,500.00.

To receive a Higher Education Merit Pay award, applicants must be participating in a college program that leads to a credential or degree in Early Childhood/Child Development. They may also be participating in a college program that emphasizes Early Childhood and leads to a Level IV or higher on the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry. Applicants are selected for participation in the Higher Ed. Merit Pay program, based upon the content and quality of their application, their priority ranking and availability of funds.

Individuals may only apply for one Merit Pay program; multiple applications will be automatically denied.

Results

- Individual caregivers embark on a professional path in early childhood and/or child development
- An increase in the number of caregiver/teachers at or above level IV on the Career Path. (This includes individuals who hold a CCDS Certificate earned through the apprenticeship program, AA degrees and BA degrees in early childhood.)

Other – Colleges, Universities,
Community or faith based organizations (CCR&R agencies, CSPD councils)
Specialized Training Grants - the goal of this grant is to identify and fund well-qualified service providers who will provide specialized training opportunities to early care and education practitioners and community agencies concerning identified early childhood needs.

Results

- Increased availability of high quality training opportunities in early care and education on a statewide basis
- Development of new and innovative materials and training opportunities for Montana's caregivers.

Other – Colleges, Universities,
Community or faith based organizations (CCR&R agencies)
Mentoring Program Grants - Best Beginnings offers Mentoring Program Grants with a one-year contract that is renewable for a second year. The intent of the Mentor Programs is to match experienced caregivers "mentors" with novice caregivers "protégés" to provide experience and practical support to those new or inexperienced in the early childhood field.

Results:

- Increased availability of high quality training opportunities in early care and education on a statewide basis through the utilization of a respected training method especially embraced in rural Montana.
- Implementation of a user friendly training option whereby an experienced caregiver/mentor provides guidance and support to a novice caregiver/protégé.

Other – Colleges and Universities

Grants for Higher Education Coursework in the Area of Early Childhood - Best Beginnings funding provides Higher Education in the area of Early Childhood in regions where this type of training is currently unavailable or in communities that are under served. Appropriate coursework is that which leads either to a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate, an Associate's Degree (AA) in early childhood or a Bachelor's Degree (BA) in early childhood.

One-year contracts are awarded which are renewable on an annual basis up to a total of four years. The initial RFP for this program was issued in FFY 2004.

Results:

- Montana's EC Rural program was created because of this grant. The EC rural program, using distance education, enables caregiver/teachers access to the 24-credit early childhood curriculum regardless of where they live in the State.
- The creation and launch a Bachelor's Degree in Early childhood through the University of Montana –Western.
- Successfully graduating students in the Early Childhood Bachelor's degree by using coaches for students in the program.

Child Care Providers

Scholarships - are provided for CDA training and assessment, associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood/child development, accreditation and stipends for Master's Degrees in Early Childhood. These scholarships are available through the Montana Early Childhood Project.

Results:

- Improved access to professional training,
- Improved completion rates for students enrolled in these programs, and
- Creation of a more highly qualified workforce.

- Improving salaries and other compensation for child care providers

A well-trained, consistent caregiver is the key ingredient in the recipe for good early care and education. All of the quality initiatives that Best Beginnings offers

are helping to improve salaries and other compensations that are building the supply and quality of child care in our communities.

- Activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development

Early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts development are addressed in the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base, which has been revised and updated to align with Montana's Early Learning Guidelines. Montana has written its Early Learning Guidelines to include all curriculum areas, which include literacy, pre-reading, and math concepts development. A "cross-walking" tool is being developed in collaboration with the Head Start State Collaboration office. This "cross-walking" tool addresses how the Montana Early Learning Guidelines align with Head Start Performance Standards, Head Start Child Outcomes, The Head Start Prism instrument, the Montana Early Care & Education Knowledge Base, and the Montana K-12 Standards.

Training opportunities relating to children's curriculum areas are delivered through Montana's training system for quality early childhood education. Montana early childhood higher education options all include specific curriculum course work.

Results

- Increased caregiver knowledge and competence in the Knowledge Base area of curriculum.
- Increased caregiver knowledge and competence in the Early learning Guideline areas of: Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy.

- Activities to promote inclusive child care

Other – Colleges, Universities
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
Child Care Providers

Best Beginnings has contracted with Child Care Plus+ (University of Montana) for a state "*Child Care Inclusion Coordinator.*" Funding has created an on-going statewide initiative to assist families and child care providers in creating inclusive environments. This project is contracted yearly for a period of up to five-years.

Results:

- Increased access to quality child care for children with disabilities
- Increased ability for child care providers to include these children in their programs.

- Other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care. (§98.51(a)(1) and (2))

Child Care Providers

Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship Program – The CCDS apprenticeship program is an organized formal system of on-the-job training under supervision of a qualified mentor at a designate early care facility, supplemented by related technical instruction in which the apprentice "learns by doing" and "earns while he or she learns". This program offers a national CCDS certificate that is recognized in all 50 states and allows a completed apprentice to be recognized at level 4 on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry.

Results:

- Utilization of a user friendly training option whereby an experienced caregiver/mentor provides guidance and support to a novice caregiver/protégé/apprentice in a supervised on-the-job training experience.
- Increased availability of high quality training opportunities in early care and education on a statewide basis through the utilization of a respected training method especially embraced in rural Montana.
- Increased wages for participants enrolled in this program through a negotiated wage progression.
- Increased access for college level coursework in early childhood
- Improvement of the quality of the early childhood workforce.

5.1.5 Is any entity identified in sections 5.1.1 or 5.1.4 a non-governmental entity?

☒ Yes, the following entities named in this part are non-governmental:

Name: The 12 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (See Attachment A)
Type: Non-profit

Name: The Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network
Type: Non-profit

Name: Banik Communications (Consumer Ed)
Type: For Profit

Name: The University of Montana, Child Care Plus+, Center on Inclusion in Early Childhood (Inclusion Services)
Type: Government/university system

Name: Varied (Specialized Training grants)
Type: non-profit, government, university system, or for-profit

Name: Varied (Mentoring Program grants)
Type: non-profit, university system,

☐ No.

5.2 *Good Start, Grow Smart* Planning and Development

This section of the Plan relates to the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative which is envisioned as a Federal-State partnership that creates linkages between CCDF, including funds set-aside for quality, and State public and private efforts to promote early learning. In this section, each Lead Agency is asked to assess its State's progress toward developing voluntary guidelines on language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts and a plan for the education and training of child care providers. The third component of the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative, planning for coordination across at least four early childhood programs and funding streams, was addressed in Section 2.1.2.

5.2.1 **Status of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning**. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts to develop research-based early learning guidelines (content standards) regarding language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts for three to five year-olds.

☐ **Planning**. The State is planning for the development of early learning guidelines. Expected date of plan completion: _____

☐ **Developing**. The State is in the process of developing early learning guidelines. Expected date of completion: _____

☐ **Developed**. The State has approved the early learning guidelines, but has not yet developed or initiated an implementation plan. The early learning guidelines are included as Attachment ___ .

☒ **Implementing**. In addition to having developed early learning guidelines, the State has embarked on implementation efforts which may include dissemination, training or embedding guidelines in the professional development system. The guidelines are included as Attachment **J**

☐ **Revising**. A State has previously developed early learning guidelines and is now revising those guidelines. The guidelines are included as Attachment ___

☐ **Other (describe):**

Describe the progress made by the State in developing voluntary guidelines for early learning since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines were developed and are being distributed and disseminated throughout the State of Montana. We are currently working on the development of a companion parent document.

If developed, are the guidelines aligned with K-12 content standards?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe.

The Montana Early Learning Guidelines are written so that early childhood professionals understand what children ages three to five need to know, understand, and be able to do. The curriculum or domain areas addressed align with Montana's K-12 content standards and demonstrate a developmental continuum.

☐ No.

Please attach a copy of the guidelines. If the guidelines are available on the web, provide the appropriate Web site address:

http://www.montana.edu/ecp/MTEarlyLearningGuidelines.doc

5.2.2 Domains of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning. Do the guidelines address language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts?

☒ Yes
☐ No

Do the guidelines address domains not specifically included in *Good Start, Grow Smart*, such as social/emotional, cognitive, physical, health, creative arts, or other domains?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines address the Good Start, Grow Smart required domains, (language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts), as well as, creative arts, physical development and health, science, social-emotional development, and social studies.

☐ No

Have guidelines been developed for children in age groups not specifically included in *Good Start, Grow Smart* (children other than those aged three to five)?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe.
☒ No

The development of early learning guidelines for ages zero to three is in the planning/development stage.

5.2.3 **Implementation of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning.** Describe the process the State used or expects to use in **implementing** its early learning guidelines. How are (or will) community, cultural, linguistic and individual variations, as well as the diversity of child care settings (be) acknowledged in implementation? Materials developed to support implementation of the guidelines are included as Attachment **J**

In September 2004, the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Agency trainers attended a "train the trainers" session. A session that presented the Montana Early Learning Guidelines, and related the document to ECE practice was presented at the annual, statewide Early Childhood Conference, attended by a wide variety of early childhood professionals. Outreach to the Head Start community in Montana began in December 2004. Outreach to statewide early childhood professionals has continued via presentations to various regional early childhood groups. Special attention to a variety of child care settings is built into these presentations and workshops.

A tool kit of training ideas and methods has been developed for trainers and Higher education. A parent companion document is being developed and outreach to public schools and other public agencies is currently being scheduled. Outreach will continue throughout 2005 – 2007, updating presentations to meet the needs of various interested parties.

Special attention was given to ensure all components of the Montana Early Learning Guidelines being culturally appropriate for Montana's families.

5.2.4 **Assessment of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning.** As applicable, describe the State's plan for **assessing** the effectiveness and/or implementation of the guidelines. Written reports of these efforts are included as **Attachment K**

The *Early Learning Guidelines* reflect what children need to know, understand, and be able to do by the time they reach kindergarten. They are written to address what adults can observe in children ages 3-5, and the ways they can support a child's individual development. The Guidelines are meant to be inclusive of all

children and the settings in which they spend time before elementary school, whether that is at home, in a child care facility, at a Head Start program, in a preschool, or in any other setting. *Montana's Early Learning Guidelines* are a voluntary set of what some refer to as "child outcomes:" They are meant to be used as a tool for early care and education practitioners, parents, elementary school teachers, or others living and working with young children to recognize and support all children at the developmental level they exhibit. The Guidelines are not a diagnostic tool, an assessment tool, or a mandatory set of regulations.

Montana expects users of the ELGs to achieve a greater understanding of early learning and child development through a practical and easy to understand document. Assessment efforts will focus on wide distribution of the document and the effectiveness of training surrounding use of the document. Provider training and education will be enhanced because the ELG's are utilized as text material in the Higher Ed coursework and through trainings offered through the CCR&R offices, and the ECSB office.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines SHOULD be used:

- To help adults recognize the critical need to meet children's social/emotional needs, and the fact that meeting those needs serves as the basis for cognitive development;
- To help adults meet children's developmental needs, including those of children with disabilities, at the level they require and in an individual capacity;
- To improve quality in early care and education programs and serve as a model for teaching;
- To motivate adults to learn more about child development;
- To emphasize the importance of early care and education to the community
- To help child care providers, kindergarten teachers, and families recognize their own value and abilities;
- To acknowledge the diverse value systems in which children learn and grow;
- To help adults focus on what children CAN do and reinforce the idea that children are capable learners;
- To increase the flow of information between families, early care and education providers, and elementary teachers; and
- To develop training and education programs for adults working and living with children.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines SHOULD NOT be used:

- As a diagnostic tool to assess a child's development;
- To "push down" curriculum meant for older children to young children;
- As a screening tool to determine school readiness and limit access to kindergarten;
- To increase pressure on children and the adults who care for and educate them;
- To justify inappropriate assessment packages;

- To place increased importance on academics and move adults away from the power of play;
- To suggest that preschool is more valuable than the home experience:
- To evaluate early care and education programs or parenting skills;
- To mandate specific curriculum or practices or serve as rules and regulations for programs to follow;
- To highlight differences between the core philosophies of early childhood and elementary education; and
- To make decisions about funding programs.

5.2.5 **State Plans for Professional Development**. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts to develop a professional development plan for early childhood providers that includes all the primary sectors: child care, Head Start, and public education.

☐ **Planning**. Indicate whether steps are under way to develop a plan. If so, describe the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

☐ **Developing**. A plan is being drafted. The draft is included as Attachment ___

☐ **Developed**. A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ___

☐ **Implementing**. A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ___

☒ **Other (describe)**:

Describe the progress made by the State in a plan for professional development since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

Montana has developed a comprehensive, coordinated career development system for practitioners working in every type of early childhood setting. The system is aimed at increasing professionalism in the field of Early Childhood and ultimately linking compensation to increased skill, experience and education. **(See Attachment L)**

The Early Childhood Project at Montana State University-Bozeman manages the Early Care and Education Career Development office. The office manages a three-legged system for career development, which is part of the Best Beginnings Quality Child Care Initiative. The system includes: 1) the Early Care and Education Training Approval System and Trainer Directory; 2) the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base, and 3) the Early Care and Education Career Path: http://www.montana.edu/ecp/

Montana's goals for Career Development are to:
1. Define what practitioners need to know,

2. Develop a formalized multi-level education and training system for early childhood,
3. Ensure that training is high quality and meets the needs of practitioners,
4. Provide equal access to education and training through innovative delivery and a coordinated system of planning, promoting and implementing learning opportunities,
5. Promote recognition and increased compensation by formal documentation of practitioners professional development,
6. Celebrate cultural and developmental diversity of practitioners, children and families, and
7. Help parents make informed choices about early care and education options for their children.

Montana's twelve Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide early childhood practitioners with a variety of approved trainings and technical assistance. Practitioners are also given the opportunity to attend approved trainings offered by other agencies in their communities along with distance learning opportunities that have been developed by Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Child Care Plus+, and ECC college coursework available on the internet

If your State has developed a plan for professional development, does the plan include:	**Yes**	**No**
A link to Early Learning Guidelines	☒	☐
Continuum of training and education to form a career path	☒	☐
Articulation from one type of training to the next	☒	☐
Quality assurance through approval of trainers	☒	☐
Quality assurance through approval of training content	☒	☐
A system to track practitioners' training	☒	☐
Assessment or evaluation of training effectiveness	☒	☐
State Credentials – Please state for which roles (e.g. infant and toddler credential, directors' credential, etc.)	☒	☐
Specialized strategies to reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers	☒	☐

For each Yes response, reference the page(s) in the plan and briefly describe the Lead Agency's efforts.

Link to Early Learning Guidelines: Montana's Professional Development system requires all trainings to be embedded with Montana's Early Learning Guidelines.

Continuum of training and education to form a career path – Career Path and Knowledge Base: The plan was developed to be inclusive of all types of early childhood practitioners in all types of settings. A Career Path with nine levels from pre-professional to a doctorate degree with an early childhood emphasis was implemented. The Pre-Professional Level is intended to bring beginning caregivers and even high school students onto the path with minimal training and experience. Practitioners who have completed the Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship Program are placed at a Level 4, which then allows extra benefits, and the ability to apply for Best Beginnings grant programs

The Career Path has two levels that reflect preparation for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. A CDA credential earned through college credit places the practitioner at Level 4 on the career path and a CDA earned without college credit places them at Level 3.

The Knowledge Base includes nine key content areas that revolve around the core content area of Personal Dispositions with the content area of Cultural and Developmental Diversity embedded in every other area. Content areas delineate the knowledge, skills and dispositions desirable for early care and education practitioners working with children birth through age 8 and their families in a variety of settings (child care centers, preschools, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family child care and group homes, Pre K- 3 public school classrooms, school-age programs, or private programs).

The Knowledge Base and the Early Learning Guidelines are complementary documents that may be used in tandem. Elements of the Early Learning Guidelines are embedded in the Knowledge Base and are reflected in the Knowledge Base content area titled "Curriculum".

Articulation from one type of training to the next: The core curriculum utilized for early childhood professional development is the 24-credit early childhood program offered through the University of Montana, Western. This curriculum is available statewide and through a distance-learning program called EC-Rural. The University of Montana, Western has developed articulation agreements with many of the other Montana University System schools, tribal colleges, and community colleges. This process is facilitated through a "Higher Ed Consortium for Early Childhood".

Credits earned through this program may result in completion of a nationally recognized certificate (CDA or CCDS) and are required for an Associates or Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood. Some approved trainings may be approved for credit (or CEUs) and may count as electives in one of the early childhood degree programs. Funding to support participation in this program is available through the Higher Ed Merit Pay program or allowable as a budget line item in a Provider Grant or Mini Grant award. (Section 5.1.4)

Quality assurance through approval of trainers: The Career Development Advisory Board and ECP staff are developing a draft plan for Trainer Development to enhance current status of the Trainer Directory. In addition, trainers subscribe to Training Solutions E-Newsletter that is distributed bimonthly through the Trainer Listserv and are encouraged to attend Adult Learning I and II that is offered in a different geographical location each year to optimize participation and reduce the distance barriers faced in Montana.

Quality assurance through approval of training content:
The **Training Approval System** is designed to assure quality by approving non-college credit training that relates to the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base content areas. All agencies, organizations, and individuals sponsoring non-credit training for early childhood practitioners must apply for approval to be included on the Statewide Training Calendar. Upon approval, the agency sponsoring the training will receive certificates to pass out to training participants in order to verify their attendance. Proof of training completion is submitted to the Early Childhood Project and entered in their database. This information is used by practitioners to document required annual training hours for licensing, Merit Pay, and for the Practitioner Registry.

A system to track practitioners' training: The Practitioner Registry is voluntary in Montana and has been created to professionalize the early care and education field. The Registry will improve the status, wages, working conditions, and employment opportunities of early care and education practitioners in Montana. Ultimately, the early care and education young children receive in Montana will be impacted. Participation in the Montana Practitioner Registry will:

- Help practitioners count themselves as professionals in early childhood services in Montana;
- Inform parents about their caregiver's level of professional development;
- Assist practitioners make decisions about fees for care and education services;
- Support caregivers when they apply for new employment positions in early childhood programs or negotiate for a salary increase with current employers;
- Validate and document the learning and training experiences in which practitioners have participated;

- Help practitioners plan future education and career goals; or
- Make a practitioner eligible for some of the Best Beginnings programs administered by the state Early Childhood Services Bureau.
    - Any level on the Career Path makes a person eligible for **Mini-Grants** or Merit Pay Programs. (See Section 5.1.4)
    - A level 2 or higher makes a person eligible for the **1-Star Quality** Program (see Section 3.2)
    - A level 3 or higher makes a person eligible for **Provider Grants** (Section 5.1.4) and the **2-Star Quality Program**. (Section 3.2)

Assessment or evaluation of training effectiveness:
All approved training events must meet quality criteria and be representative of one or more *Knowledge Base* areas. Trainers are encouraged to have evaluation forms available for students to fill out and share with the instructor. This helps assure continual improvement in the training session. If the training is sponsored through an ECSB contractor, evaluation forms are required and must be available for monitoring purposes. The ECSB contract monitor may observe the class and provide coaching or other professional development options (e.g. Adult Learning I & II) to the instructor.

Certain courses such as the Montana Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers, and the novice provider (formerly Starting Out Successfully) training contain "lab" components. Classroom instruction must be translated into practice at a child care facility and observed by the instructor. This assures transformational change is occurring and the learning objectives are met.

State Credentials: Montana has a Certification for Infant Toddler Caregivers (Section 5.1.1) and certificate for a Child Care Development Specialist earned through the Early Childhood Apprenticeship program. (Section 5.1.4). Other credentials recognized on the Career Path include the CDA, and college degrees (AA, BA, MA, PhD) in early childhood or child development.

Specialized strategies to reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers: Child Care Resource and Referral offices are responsible for facilitating child care by family, friends and neighbors if a parent requests this type of care. These caregivers are generally approved as Legally Unregistered Providers (LUP) or Legally Unregistered In-Home Providers (LUI). These caregivers are afforded access to all of the training events offered through the CCR&R agency, the quarterly CCR&R newsletter, and access to CCR&R resource libraries.

For each No response, indicate whether the Lead Agency intends to incorporate these components.

Are the opportunities available:	Yes	No
Statewide	☒	☐
To Center-based Child Care Providers	☒	☐
To Group Home Providers	☒	☐
To Family Home Providers	☒	☐
To In-Home Providers	☒	☐
Other (describe):	☐	☒

Describe how the plan addresses early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development.

The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base underwent an extensive revision in the past year and its 2nd edition was published in December 2004. The Early Childhood Project facilitated the revision process. Every content area was reviewed and revised by members of the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium and feedback was widely solicited in a variety of ways. The 'Curriculum' section was the most comprehensive rewrite and reflects Montana's Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs). Both documents include specific curriculum sections on Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. Training for trainers on both documents have been conducted statewide. CCR&R's and other training sponsors will continue to develop and offer specific training about the ELGs in their upcoming training calendars. The ELG document is being used as a text in many college Early Childhood Education curriculum courses.

Are program or provider-level incentives offered to encourage provider training and education?

☒ Yes. Describe, including any connections between the incentives and training relating to early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

Montana has a variety of programs to promote training and continuing education and provide incentives to students to continue their education:

- Merit Pay awards $500 or $250 to practitioners, who apply for, develop and complete an individualized training plan of 50 hours or 23 hours respectively of training within a year. The plan must address training within the Knowledge Base content areas that include all areas of early childhood curriculum.

- Merit Pay awards $750 to undergraduate/post graduate students enrolled in early childhood higher education that leads to a CDA, AA or BA/BS, MA degree in Early Childhood.
- Merit Pay awards $400 to practitioners, who apply for, and complete the 60-hour West Ed Infant Toddler training which allows them to become a Montana Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver.
- CDA Assessment Scholarships to help students pay the cost of CDA assessment.
- Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program awards Montana Certified Infant Toddler caregivers, who are working a minimum of 5 hours per day directly with infants and toddlers, a maximum stipend amount of $1,600 over an eighteen month time period.
- Montana has begun the preliminary planning on building incentives, such as the I/T stipend, for teachers working with 3-5 year olds. Linking such stipends to specific training completed in the ELGs and development of a comprehensive self-assessment utilizing the Knowledge Base are being discussed as possible viable strategies.

☐ No. If no, is there any plan to offer incentives to encourage provider training and education?

What are the expected **outcomes** of the State's professional development plan and efforts to improve the skills of child care providers? As applicable, how does (or will) the State assess the effectiveness of its plan and efforts? If so, how does (or will) the State use assessment to help shape its professional development plan and training/education for child care providers?

Expected Outcomes for Montana's Professional Development Plan are:

- Increased quality and accessibility to high quality training opportunities that address all content areas of the Knowledge Base;
- A continuum of training and education from entry level to intermediate and advanced to meet the range of needs among providers for inclusion on a statewide training calendar;
- Identification of gaps in training and development of programs and practices to maximize resources and depth of training,
- Coordinating education and training activities with a variety of organizations including but not limited to:
    a) Head Start and Early Head Start;
    b) The Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium,
    c) The Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council
    d) The Montana Resource and Referral Network,
    e) The Montana Child Care Association,
    f) The Montana Association for the Education of Young Children; and

g) The Montana Career Development Advisory Board.

- Promotion of increased compensation for practitioners who have achieved higher levels on the Career Path and other measures of quality, including Best Beginnings program development of the Star Program, Infant Toddler Stipend Program, and the revision of the Merit Pay Program to include Infant Toddler training and Higher Education training to better meet the needs of practitioner students.
- Development of a framework and infrastructure for the provision of a well-trained and educated early childhood workforce across all program settings;
- Partner to obtain current early childhood workforce information on wages, benefits, and education through research studies for both center, family and group child care homes and utilize the results to build programs to improve compensation and inform policy makers. A Center Directors' Project is currently underway to assess the specific professional development needs of this population. The project involves conference call focus groups, a statewide survey, and a Director Symposium.
- The Early Childhood Project will be participating in the national Data 4 Mapping Project to create core data elements for Registries nationwide to promote consistency in data collection and analysis about the early childhood workforce in the US and thus inform policy.
- Maintaining a child care practitioner-training registry on a statewide data base.
- Conduct two Career Development Advisory board meetings annually with the May meeting evaluating achievement of the annual Work Plan and developing goals and objectives into a detailed action plan for the upcoming year.
- The ECP undergoes program review annually with their ECSB program monitor and receives a status report based upon that on-site review. Ongoing assessment and feedback is received on a daily basis through email, phone and written correspondence to the ECP, all of which is responded to individually and passed along to the board or other entity for further consideration. This contributes to the effectiveness and dynamic nature of the system.

PART 6

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

(Only the 50 States and the District of Columbia complete Part 6.)

The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRCHSCC) of DHHS's Maternal and Child Health Bureau supports a comprehensive, current, on-line listing of the licensing and regulatory requirements for child care in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. In lieu of requiring a State Lead Agency to provide information that is already publicly available, ACF accepts this compilation as accurately reflecting the States' licensing requirements. The listing, which is maintained by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, is available on the World Wide Web at: http://nrc.uchsc.edu/.

6.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, §98.16(j))

6.1.1 Are all center-based providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation?

☒ Yes. Answer 6.1.2, skip 6.1.3, and go to 6.2.
☐ No. Describe which center-based providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

6.1.2 Have center licensing requirements as relates to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2)&(3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.1.3 For center-based care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

6.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.2.1 Are all group home providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? If:

☒ Yes. Answer 6.2.2, skip 6.2.3, and go to 6.3.
☐ No. Describe which group home providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.

6.2.2 Have group home licensing requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.2.3 For group home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

6.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.3.1 Are all family child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? If:

☒ Yes. Answer 6.3.2, skip 6.3.3, and go to 6.4.
☐ No. Describe which family child care providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.3.2 and 6.3.3.

Family Child Care providers under State law are subject to registration and licensing requirements and as such are included in the compilation of state regulations as specified in the NRCHSCC.

Montana is electing to answer section 6.3.3 to address the category of care known as Legally Unregistered Providers (LUP), which are not registered/licensed and are not included in NRCHSCC's compilation.

Legally Unregistered Providers— are defined as those who provide care to one or two children from separate families or the children of one family. These providers are LEGAL according to state law and as such qualify for CCDF funds, but they are not licensed or registered. Legally Unregistered Providers (LUP) care for children *in the home of the provider.*

6.3.2 Have family child care provider requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.3.3 For family care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

For clarification purposes *the following health and safety requirements apply to legally unregistered providers (LUP) and legally unregistered in-home providers (LUI). The only difference between and LUP and an LUI is the place where care is occurring. LUPs provide care in the home of the provider and LUIs provide care in the home of the child. The regulations surrounding these categories of care are not reflected in the NRCHSCC's compilation of state licensing/registration requirements.*

Providers known as legally unregistered providers (LUP) are not subject to the same level of health and safety requirements as registered or licensed providers. They must however, meet the following requirements:

1. Be 18 years of age;
2. Be mentally and physically capable of providing child care that meets safety, health and other basic child care requirements;
3. Not have a substantiated report involving harm, or physical or sexual abuse to children or adults;

4. Not be convicted or adjudicated of a crime involving harm to children, or physical or sexual violence against any person;
5. Not be included in the parent's cash assistance payment;
6. Is not currently diagnosed or receiving therapy or medication for a mental illness or emotional disturbance which might create a risk to children in care;
7. Is not chemically dependent upon drugs or alcohol;
8. Agree to attend an orientation session within 60 days of approval to participate in the program. This orientation training session at a minimum by law and administrative rule, will consist of at least the following topics:
    - Health protection;
    - Child safety;
    - Child development and well being;
    - Intake record keeping;
    - Staffing requirements;
    - Universal precautions;
    - Insurance requirements.
9. Provide care to the children of one family or, if the children are from different families, may care for two or fewer children; and
10. Not be a parent or person acting in loco parentis.

Legally unregistered providers must attend an orientation session within 60 days of approval to participate in the program. This orientation session is designed to give all providers--including registered and licensed providers-- information about health and safety standards (including information on immunizations, building safety, and equipment safety), state payment information, business planning, child care nutrition, and information on creating a positive, developmentally appropriate environment. Therefore, LUP/LUI providers are made aware of the requirements through the orientation process.

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

  Legally unregistered child care providers (LUPs) and receive training in the prevention and control of infectious diseases and immunization recommendations in the health segment of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application, which is signed and received by the provider and the parent.

- Building and physical premises safety

  Legally unregistered child care providers (LUPs) receive training on building and physical safety in the safety segment of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application, which is signed and received by the provider and the parent.

- Health and safety training

Legally unregistered child care providers (LUPs) receive training in health and safety in the health and safety segments of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application, which is signed and received by the provider and the parent.

The LUP/LUI application and self-assessment is included as **Attachment M.**

6.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.4.1 Are all in-home child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under the State law reflected in the NRCHSCC's compilation referenced above?

☐ Yes. Answer 6.4.2, skip 6.4.3, and go to 6.5.
☒ No. Describe which in-home child care providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.4.2 and 6.4.3.

Legally Unregistered In-Home (LUI) Providers—these providers are defined as those who provide care to one or two children from separate families or the child of one family. These providers are LEGAL according to state law and as such qualify for CCDF funds, but they are not licensed or registered. LUI providers *provide care in the child's home.*

6.4.2 Have in-home health and safety requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.4.2 For in-home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

For clarification purposes *the following health and safety requirements apply to legally unregistered providers (LUP) and legally unregistered in-home providers (LUI). The only difference between and LUP and an LUI is the place where care is occurring. LUPs provide care in the home of the provider and LUIs provide care in the home of the child. The regulations surrounding these categories of care are not reflected in the NRCHSCC's compilation of state licensing/registration requirements.*

Providers known as "legally unregistered in-home providers" (LUIs) are not subject to the same level of health and safety requirements as registered or licensed providers. They must however, meet the following requirements:

9. Be 18 years of age;
10. Be mentally and physically capable of providing child care that meets safety, health and other basic child care requirements;
11. Not have a substantiated report involving harm, or physical or sexual abuse to children or adults;
12. Not be convicted or adjudicated of a crime involving harm to children, or physical or sexual violence against any person;
13. Not be included in the parent's cash assistance payment;
14. Is not currently diagnosed or receiving therapy or medication for a mental illness or emotional disturbance which might create a risk to children in care;
15. Is not chemically dependent upon drugs or alcohol;
16. Agree to attend an orientation session within 60 days of approval to participate in the program. This orientation training session at a minimum by law and administrative rule, will consist of at least the following topics:
    - Health protection;
    - Child safety;
    - Child development and well being;
    - Intake record keeping;
    - Staffing requirements;
    - Universal precautions;
    - Insurance requirements.
11. Provide care to the children of one family or, if the children are from different families, may care for two or fewer children; and
12. Not be a parent or person acting in loco parentis.

Legally unregistered in-home providers (LUI) must attend an orientation session within 60 days of approval to participate in the program. This orientation session is designed to give all providers--including registered and licensed providers--information about health and safety standards (including information on immunizations, building safety, and equipment safety), state payment information, business planning, child care nutrition, and information on creating a positive, developmentally appropriate environment. Therefore, LUP/LUI providers are made aware of the requirements through the orientation process.

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

  Legally unregistered in-home child care providers (LUIs) receive training in the prevention and control of infectious diseases and immunization recommendations in the health segment of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application, which is signed and received by the provider and the parent.

- Building and physical premises safety
  Legally unregistered in-home providers (LUIs) receive training on building and physical safety in the safety segment of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application. which is signed and received by the provider and the parent.

- Health and safety training
  Legally unregistered in-home providers (LUIs) receive training in health and safety in the health and safety segments of the required orientation class. A self-assessment checklist is included on the LUP/LUI application. which is signed and received by the provider and the parent

  The LUP/LUI application and self-assessment is included as **Attachment M.**

6.5 Exemptions to Health and Safety Requirements

At Lead Agency option, the following relatives: grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings (who live in a separate residence from the child in care) may be exempted from health and safety requirements. (658P(4)(B), §98.41(a)(1)(ii)(A)) Indicate the Lead Agency's policy regarding these relative providers:

☒ **All** relative providers are subject to the same requirements as described in sections 6.1 - 6.4 above, as appropriate; there are **no exemptions** for relatives or different requirements for them.
☐ **All** relative providers are **exempt** from all health and safety requirements.
☐ **Some or all** relative providers are subject to different health and safety requirements from those described in sections 6.1 - 6.4. The following describes those requirements and identifies the relatives they apply to:

6.6 Enforcement of Health and Safety Requirements

Each Lead Agency is required to certify that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided comply with all applicable health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(E), §§98.40(a)(2), 98.41(d)) The following is a description of how health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

- Are child care providers subject to routine unannounced visits (i.e., not specifically for the purpose of complaint investigation or issuance/renewal of a license)?
  ☒ Yes, and the following indicates the providers subject to routine unannounced visits and the frequency of those visits:

All providers are visited on an unannounced basis. This includes any and all types of inspections such as Renewal Inspection, Complaint Inspection, or the mandatory 20% surveys.

By state law, 20% of all family and group day care home providers are subject to an unannounced inspection. The Department calculates this figure based upon the total number of family and group providers and divides by 20%. We calculate on a licensing service area basis as well as a state-wide basis.

Day Care Centers receive at least two visits per year unless the facility has qualified for an extended license. One of the two visits is for the purposes of renewing the license, while the second visit gives the department to observe the 'program' and validate other requirements which may have been a concern during the renewal visit.

Family and Group Day Care Homes are not inspected annually, however, 20% of all family and group homes are inspected on a yearly basis. Follow up inspections may occur if the deficiencies were such that an observation of compliance was deemed necessary.

☐ No

- Are child care providers subject to background checks?
  ☒ Yes, and the following types of providers are subject to background checks (indicate when such checks are conducted):

All licensed, registered and LUP providers are subject to a criminal background checks as well as a Child Protective Services background checks. Licensed and registered providers are also subject to Tribal criminal and protective services checks. These checks are conducted on an annual basis. New caregivers have background checks performed upon employment and annually thereafter.

☐ No

- Does the State require that child care providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care? (Serious injuries are defined as injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.)
  ☒ Yes, and the following describes the State's reporting requirements and how such injuries are tracked (if applicable):

By administrative rule, providers are required to report serious injuries that require medical treatment. The providers can either submit a written incident

report, or may contact the local child care licensor and verbally report the incident.

☐ No

- Other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

  State Law mandates that the department must visit and inspect at least 20% of all registered providers. As a matter of policy, the program has decided that all newly registered facilities will receive a visit within 120 days of being registered. So, not only are we visiting 20% of facilities, we are also visiting new providers. This effort has helped those new providers understand and comply with the rules early on.

  All day care centers are inspected at least two times a year—unless these facilities have obtained an extended license. One visit must pertain to the licensing process, while the second is an observation visit and can address and follow up on any concerns found during the licensing inspection. Centers are also required to have inspections from the local health department as well as the fire department.

6.7 Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

The State assures that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendations for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

The State exempts the following children from immunization (check all that apply):

☒ Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts and uncles).
☒ Children who receive care in their own homes.
☐ Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds.
☒ Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

PART 7
HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES

(Only the Territories complete Part 7.)

7.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all center-based care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all group home care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all family child care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all in-home care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.5 Exemptions to Territorial Health and Safety Requirements

At Lead Agency option, the following relatives may be exempted from health and safety requirements: grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings (who live in a separate residence from the child in care). (658P(4)(B), §98.41(a)(1)(ii)(A)). Indicate the Lead Agency's policy regarding these relative providers:

☐ **All** relative providers are subject to the same requirements as described in sections 7.1 - 7.4 above, as appropriate; there are **no exemptions** for relatives or different requirements for them.
☐ **All** relative providers are **exempt** from all health and safety requirements.
☐ **Some or all** relative providers are subject to **different** health and safety requirements from those described in sections 7.1 - 7.4 and the following describes those different requirements and the relatives they apply to:

7.6 Enforcement of Territorial Health and Safety Requirements

Each Lead Agency is required to certify that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided comply with all applicable health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(E), §§98.40(a)(2), 98.41(d)) The following is a description of how Territorial health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

Are child care providers subject to routine unannounced visits (i.e., not specifically for the purpose of complaint investigation or issuance/renewal of a license)?

☐ Yes, and the following indicates the providers subject to routine unannounced visits and the frequency of those visits:
☐ No

Are child care providers subject to background checks?

☐ Yes, and the following types of providers are subject to background checks (indicate when such checks are conducted):
☐ No

Does the Territory require that child care providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care? (Serious injuries are defined as injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.)

☐ Yes, and the following describes the Territory's reporting requirements and how such injuries are tracked (if applicable):
☐ No

Other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

7.7 Exemptions from Territorial Immunization Requirements

The Territory assures that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendations for childhood immunizations of the Territorial public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

The Territory exempts the following children from immunization (check all that apply):

- ☐ Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts and uncles).
- ☐ Children who receive care in their own homes.
- ☐ Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds.
- ☐ Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

APPENDIX 1
PROGRAM ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

The Lead Agency, named in Part 1 of this Plan, assures that:

(1) upon approval, it will have in effect a program that complies with the provisions of the Plan printed herein, and is administered in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 as amended, Section 418 of the Social Security Act, and all other applicable Federal laws and regulations. (658D(b), 658E(a))

(2) the parent(s) of each eligible child within the State who receives or is offered child care services for which financial assistance is provided is given the option either to enroll such child with a child care provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of the service; or to receive a child care certificate. (658E(c)(2)(A)(i))

(3) in cases in which the parent(s) elects to enroll the child with a provider that has a grant or contract with the Lead Agency, the child will be enrolled with the eligible provider selected by the parent to the maximum extent practicable. (658E(c)(2)(A)(ii))

(4) the child care certificate offered to parents shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of child care services provided under a grant or contract. (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii))

(5) with respect to State and local regulatory requirements, health and safety requirements, payment rates, and registration requirements, State or local rules, procedures or other requirements promulgated for the purpose of the Child Care and Development Fund will not significantly restrict parental choice among categories of care or types of providers. (658E(c)(2)(A), §98.15(p), §98.30(g), §98.40(b)(2), §98.41(b), §98.43(c), §98.45(d))

(6) that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendation for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

(7) that CCDF Discretionary funds are used to supplement, not supplant, State general revenue funds for child care assistance for low-income families. (P.L. 106-554)

The Lead Agency also certifies that:

(1) it has procedures in place to ensure that providers of child care services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund afford parents unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during the normal hours of operations and whenever such children are in the care of such providers. (658E(c)(2)(B))

(2) it maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and makes information regarding such complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C))

(3) it will collect and disseminate to parents of eligible children and the general public, consumer education information that will promote informed child care choices. (658E(c)(2)(D))

(4) it has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided in the State. (658E(c)(2)(E))

(5) there are in effect within the State (or other area served by the Lead Agency), under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children; these requirements are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available under the Child Care and Development Fund. (658E(c)(2)(E))

(6) procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund comply with all applicable State or local health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(G))

(7) payment rates under the Child Care and Development Fund for the provision of child care services are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to comparable child care services in the State or sub-State area that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this program or under any other Federal or State child care assistance programs. (658E(c)(4)(A))

APPENDIX 2
ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY TERMINOLOGY

For purposes of determining eligibility and priority for CCDF-funded child care services, lead agencies must define the following *italicized* terms. (658P, 658E(c)(3)(B))

1. (*attending* (a job training or educational program; include minimum hours if applicable) –A person is considered to be attending, whether part-time or full-time, if they remain in good standing with either the job training or education program in which they are enrolled. Child care is allowed for scheduled class time and the time necessary to commute between the parent's home, the day care facility and the education or training facility.

2. *in loco parentis* –An adult friend or relative with whom the child resides, whether or not custody is court ordered.

3. *job training and educational program* – A job-training program is a program designed to assist eligible families to become self-sufficient by providing needed employment-related activities and supportive services. An education program is a program that is recognized by the State of Montana as an accredited education program. Job training and educational programs include but are not limited to vocational-technical schools, business colleges, junior colleges, universities, and/or special classes which may be classified as "employment related training". An educational program may also include students working to support their education (i.e. work study).

4. *physical or mental incapacity* (if the Lead Agency provides such services to children age 13 and older) – Children under the age of 19, with disabilities or cognitive delay, who are not able without assistance, to properly manage or care for his/her person. Appropriate clinical authorities must document this determination.

5. *protective services* -To qualify for child protective services (CPS) child care, the child must need care because of the danger of neglect or abuse. The need for protective services is determined by county social workers. CPS child care for foster care families and respite care require approval of DPHHS Family Services Regional Administrators.

6. *residing with* – A child must live in the same household as the parent, or person acting in loco parentis, during the period for which child care services are requested.

7. *special needs child* – A child with special needs is an individual age 0 to 18, with an Individual Education Plan or an Individual Family Service Plan, who, because of his/her disability or cognitive delay, is not able to care for him or herself without assistance.

8. *very low income* – Families whose income falls below the Montana TANF Monthly Income Standards/Shelter Obligation benefit standards to be used with adults included in

the TANF filing/assistance unit [Montana TANF Manual Sec. 001, page 4]. Beginning August 1, 2003, the following standards apply:

Family Size	Very Low Monthly Income
1	$ 221
2	$ 298
3	$ 375
4	$ 452
5	$ 530

9. *working* (include minimum hours if applicable) – An individual is working when s/he performs any paid type of legal labor on either a full or part time basis and has documents to show income received. Self-employment is determined for the person submitting evidence based on IRS income guidelines.
   - Two parent families must work a minimum of 120 hours per month.
   - Single parent families must work a minimum of 60 hour per month.
   - Single parents, while attending school full time, must work a minimum of 40 hour per month.
   - Disabled individuals, who are determined unable to care for their children by a physician or licensed psychologist, are not subject to a minimum hourly work requirement.

10. Additional terminology related to conditions of eligibility or priority established by the Lead Agency:

(a) TANF families –

TANF families are families who participate in an approved family investment activities in Montana's welfare reform program.

(b) foster care –

Twenty-four hour out-of-home care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has placement responsibility.

(c) medical emergencies –

An unexpected medical condition of a parent or child, interrupting employment for less than three months. The parent must have employment to which they will return and a physician's statement identifying the medical need for rest.

(d) *respite care* -

The short-term supervision or care of a foster child in an emergency or on an intermittent basis.

(e)*teen attending high school* –

A teen parent attending high school is guaranteed child care assistance during school and work hours. Child care is not provided for after-school study time.